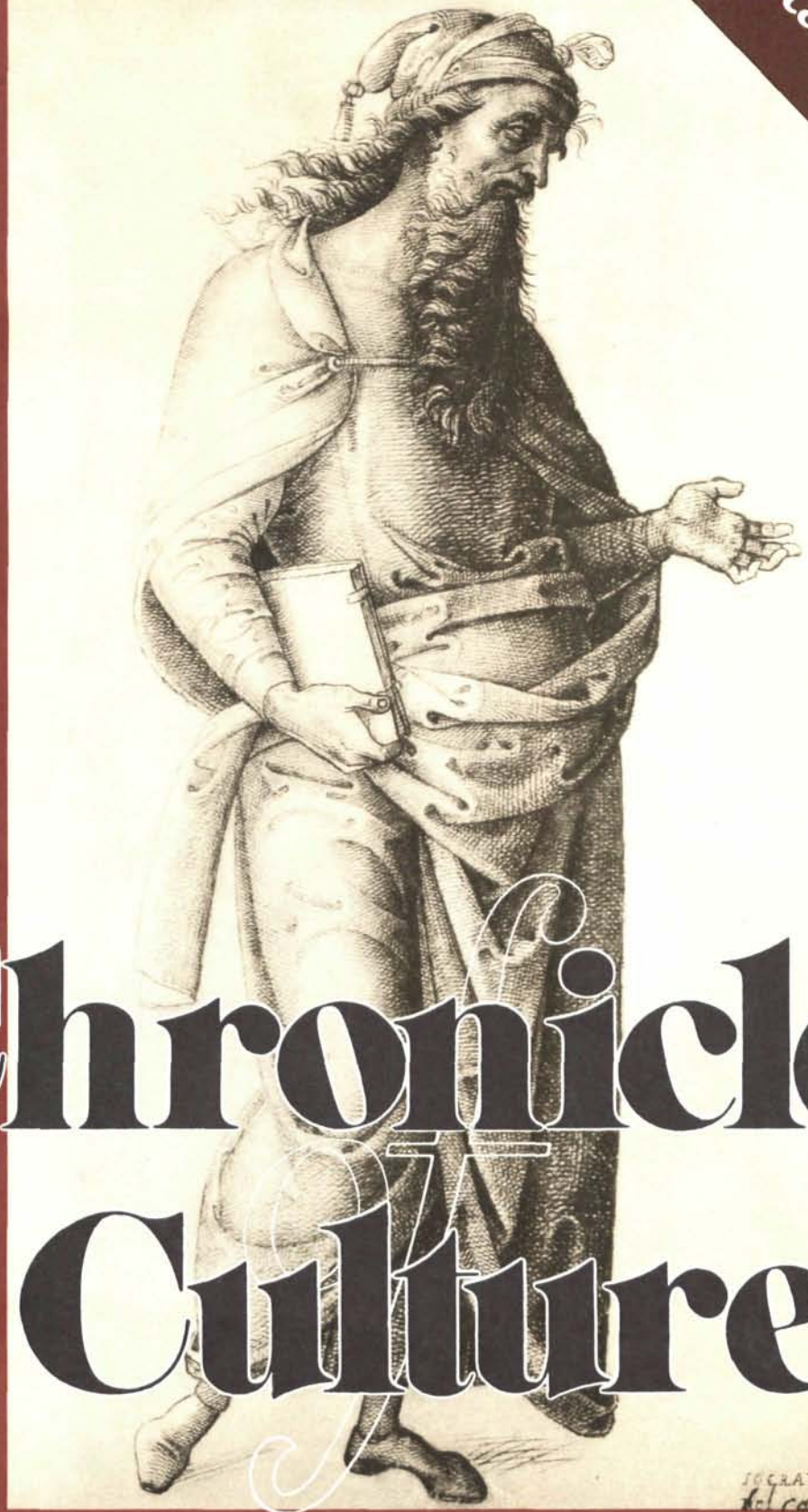
Toward a Weltanschauung



Chronicles of Culture

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Toward a Weltanschauung

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COMMENT

A thought came to my mind several months ago while watching a television interview of two rival groups from Texas involved in a debate concerning school curriculum. Those whom one could identify as conservatives protested passionately against using our schools to "peddle" unpatriotic and antireligious views. The other side countered by appealing to the separation of church and state and by attacking their opponents as enemies of intellectual freedom. This exchange of platitudes should be familiar to any observer of the contemporary cultural scene. Indeed, only a mental incompetent or stranger to contemporary America would have been unable to anticipate the clichés uttered by both camps. Yet clichés do remain important—not as vehicles of original thinking, but for defining positions and evoking reactions.

On balance, the grass-roots conservatives featured on the program were operating with less-persuasive commonplaces than their opponents on the left. In making this judgment I am not evaluating the demonstrable validity of either presentation. Both sides engaged in grandstanding and appealed to sentiment and conventional prejudice (resorting to what Aristotle called the forensic device of the enthymeme), as well as to analytic understanding. Unhappily, the conservatives failed to grasp what would be the popular perception of their rhetoric outside of their own community. They sacrificed cogency to "tell it like it is." They thereby lost the opportunity to present themselves as defenders of freedom, not simply of "sectarian" virtue. They also, by the way, missed the chance to render more intelligible a conservative view of reality.

What these good people *should* have stressed is that education is not "value-neutral." And, given this truism, the parents of those who attend public schools should have at least as much right to determine the values taught there as the social engineers who staff educational agencies. The most serious moral question in terms of public education only indirectly bears on the tension between religion and secularism. The core question around which other issues fall is "Who should socialize the young?" or, to put it a bit differently, "Whose values should be used to achieve this end?"

Even a cursory examination of my children's social-studies textbooks reveals the wide gap between what I was taught in public school and the information on history and society currently being presented. The difference cannot be reduced to degrees of factual accuracy. The argument is over competing paradigms, values, and visions of the good. This was brought home to me when I heard the Texas religionists complain about the anticapitalist bias pervading their schools' textbooks. They also lamented the use of study materials which seemed to blame the United States for, among other disasters, the brutality of the Vietnamese conflict. As a trained historian, I suspect that these leftist interpretations of history are no more scientific than those that proceed from diametrically opposite philosophical premises. Those who believe in the free market and Judeo-Christian social values and who see America as trying historically to embody these principles are certainly as capable of teaching "educational facts" as those on the other side. The question, however, is whether social traditionalists can keep the liberal left from having a monopoly over public educational policy.

Grass-roots conservatives do not always effectively express their opposition to proposed legislation supposedly on behalf of homosexuals and women. In these matters they have largely confined themselves to stressing the sinful and unnatural character of homosexual relations and to associating feminist causes with a lesbian assault on the family. Much of the legislation they have opposed does aim at blurring the distinction between normal and aberrant social behavior. It seeks to institutionalize a transvaluation of moral values, often by appealing to an amoral sentimentality. On these points the Moral Majority may have even *under*stated the utterly vicious and brutalizing effects of the institutionalizaton of what was once perceived as the adversary culture. But even more important for mounting a battle against it is that "liberationist" social legislation assaults the rights and liberties of the nonradicalized segments of society. Laws to protect homosexuals would *require* those who consider their lifestyle morally and culturally repulsive (e.g. all religious traditionalists) to rent public lodgings to self-advertising homosexuals and to serve them in restaurants and other places of business. The effect of such legislation (which is no doubt intended) would be to obliterate the social space in which traditionalist communities have hitherto managed to exist.

The now-defunct ERA posed an even more massive potential threat to our eroded liberties and to the toleration of nonradical social values. Such an amendment would strongly encourage judges and bureaucrats, most of whom are beyond electoral recall, to impose guidelines upon the rest of society. That many such impositions have already taken place does not gainsay the likelihood that greater and more regular control over human relations would result from the passage of an equal-rights constitutional amendment. It is hard to exaggerate the lengths to which enterprising jurists and crusading lawyers might push its application to the detriment of historical liberties. One need only recall that the 1964 Civil Rights Act created legal mechanisms and justifications for what has been properly called "reverse discrimination." When this possibility was anticipated by senatorial critics who pointed especially to Title VII of that bill, Senators Humphrey and Muskie, two later supporters of the quota system, ridiculed their supposedly alarmist reaction. Particularly in the wake of bureaucratic and judicial encroachment upon the majority's freedom of action in the name of oppressed but often bogus minorities, social conservatives may find in the appeal to liberty an unexpected

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strong card.

It may be objected that I am urging traditionalists to build their arguments upon what seems a lower good, freedom from coercion, rather than a higher one, social virtue. There is much to be said for this criticism. I, for one, am convinced that no society can long endure which ceases to agree on ethical first principles. But to the extent that conservatives must first engage in a holding action before being able to prevail, it would, in the short run, be useful to expose their opponents as hypocrites. Social liberals are, in fact, not fighting for the expansion of freedom. And this would be the case even if one granted their spurious distinction between property rights and human ones, and conceded that human beings, save for TV scriptwriters and newspaper commentators, have no claim to freedom in the economic sphere.

Liberals do not respect most people's right to live by their own light, without forced social re-education. All their aid to alternative lifestyles and aggrieved minorities has inevitably entailed the abridgement of liberty for the nonliberal family and certainly in the marketplace. Conservatives must not forgo the opportunity to make this fact better known. In the process of doing so, they will strengthen their ties with the true friends of freedom and consistent thinking—and indeed with all those who are not what Russell Kirk has styled the sworn "enemies of the permanent things." Only by such rhetorical prudence and strategic resourcefulness can the well-intentioned patriots from Texas hope to sway their audience. Their struggle over educational curricula stems from their determination to rear their children independently of a bureaucratically imposed leftist ideology. But they will never transmit this truth unless they first learn to convey their message effectively.

And what they must ultimately communicate is a vision of the social good, for on this may hinge the final outcome of the current confrontation between right and left. Traditionalists and social conservatives should not spurn the value of liberty because their opponents have abused it. Instead they must uphold the integral relationship between freedom and the need for social constraint among a truly free people. This teaching, which C.S. Lewis considered the moral essence of the world's great religions, deserves particular attention in a self-governing nation. In a nation such as ours it is the people who must discipline themselves and who must choose to be virtuous. Political assemblies and bureaucrats in our republic cannot legislate morality. At most they can reflect and give direction to an impulse or aspiration already present among the populace.

To the extent that liberal social engineers have had their way with the American people, the answer is not simply that "the bad guys have seized power." Closer to the truth is that the American people have been made to *will* the imposition upon themselves of radical social values. The powerful position of the left within our educational institutions and news media has not been without political and cultural effects. Undoing this pattern of control will be an arduous task which will have to start at the grass roots. The conservative cause, however, is fortunate to have support there. What it must do at that level is to evolve rhetoric and a world view equal to the undertaking.

—Paul Gottfried

Dr. Gottfried is a frequent contributor to Chronicles.

LIBERAL CULTURE

Et Voila!

For years the editors of *The Nation* have labored hard to twist logic and morality into a defense of school boards who purchase books for students which are offensive to their parents. The result of their ingenious toil has been a hackneyed stage play in which white-hatted professional school boards rescued fair intellectual liberty for the majority from the foul clutches of a few black-hatted illiterate zealots. Naturally, to prevent them from spoiling this production, *The Nation* found it necessary to keep bound and gagged offstage certain facts—that the parents' groups were often large and included intelligent and well-read individuals, that the school boards were actually abridging the academic liberty of parents and students by imposing their own philosophy of ethical relativism upon them and that the money to enforce this dogmatic imposition came out of the taxes paid by the protesting parents. Still, true to the playwrights' expectations, the liberal audience applauded or booed on cue.

But now a new development. A group of *liberal* parents from a posh area of Long Island have assumed the role of indignant opponents of school-board policy. When the school board governing Island Tree High School decided to exclude the rubbish produced by such hacks as Vonnegut and Cleaver from the library and the budget, these crusaders demanded that their children (and everybody else's) be permitted the educational ecstasy of wallowing in such filth —at taxpayer expense. Though they usually formed part of the claque cheering school boards and panning parents, the New York Civil Liberties Union somehow left the gallery to champion this cause center stage during the six years of litigation necessary to win a favorable Supreme Court ruling. And now what do we find but that the editors of *Nation* are now rushing in from the wings to congratulate the parents and to excoriate the school board, while solemnly sermonizing:

> Students and parents should be prepared to resist, in the courts if necessary, those who believe schools should indoctrinate rather than educate.

Having so eagerly identified themselves with the black-hats in a melodrama of their own creation, *Nation*'s editors shouldn't be surprised if we hiss at this point. □

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After Midcentury

Jay Cantor: *The Space Between: Literature and Politics;* The Johns Hopkins University Press; Baltimore.

Robert C. Rosen: *John Dos Passos: Politics and the Writer;* University of Nebraska Press; Lincoln.

by Lee Congdon

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive," Wordsworth rhapsodized about the French Revolution, "But to be young was very heaven!" Similarly, many Americans who came of age during the 1960's look back upon the dawn of the Age of Aquarius as the seed time of their hopes and dreams, years of liberation from, among other things, "repressed" sexuality and "hypocrisy." Out of the crucible of war, assassination and violent confrontation, they still believe that a new nation—some called it Woodstock—was then being forged. Its founding fathers were not Washington, Madison and Jefferson, but Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown. Its national heroes were Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and Tom Hayden, or, if one was black, Huey P. Newton, Eldridge Cleaver and Bobby Seale. Its citizens were virtuous and *sensitive*—a nation of Holden Caulfields. Naturally, these sensitive people hated war—unless it was fought against oppressive governments of the sort that represented the United States. They wanted to make love or, more precisely, to have sex. They hated vulgar commercialism but spent lavishly on stereos, drugs, fast cars and records. They demanded unrestricted freedom of speech but shouted down those few who refused to pander to their enthusiasms and prejudices. From members of the preceding generation, particularly their parents, they were irreconcilably alienated. It was in a suburb of Chicago that a shy, intelligent girl, the daughter of a pharmacist, grew up almost unnoticed. After graduating from a Christian college, she went to study in Berlin, where she met and married "Red Rudy" Dutschke. She and Red Rudy called their son "Che," to signal their solidarity with the Argentine-born revolutionary.

Jay Cantor was studying at Harvard during those tumultuous years. He knew his Marcuse and Brown and "was happy to be alive in such an exciting time." When he was not amusing himself with his kaleidoscope, comic books and drugs or exchanging ideas with friends, he was searching for a political literature that would be "an instrument of the struggle." After graduation, he accepted an invitation to teach English at Tufts University, but, to his chagrin, he soon discovered that his students were not nearly so sensitive as his classmates had been. The revolution would have to be postponed, perhaps indefinitely. Cantor began to ponder the implications of that depressing fact, and in the essays that comprise *The Space Between* he exhibits for our consideration a kind of annotated stream of consciousness.

To begin with, he concluded that it had been a mistake to suppose that anyone or any party could simply plan and then execute a revolution; history was not so easily shaped. Just so, he could no longer accept the idea that one might interpret a work of literature by employing prescribed ideological categories. He resolved therefore to set aside all preconceived solutions to the world's ills, convinced that a deeper and more searching analysis was required. In a moment of revelatory inspiration, he saw that it was not merely, or even principally, the outside world that needed to be changed; it was the self. True revolution would begin in his own consciousness, and it would never end. Literature was political after all, but only insofar as it pointed the way to overcoming the self. Freed from the shackles of ideology, literature (and art in general) could at last perform its authentic task. Exit Marcuse (the philosopher-ideologue) and enter Norman O. Brown, who introduced Cantor to "another idea of politics," which was, briefly stated, that politics is art—"they are the same activity." By means of art/politics, one might create value and thus effect a revolution in human consciousness, a revolution that would be permanent and goalless. Like William Carlos Williams, Cantor came to believe that "a new world is only a new mind."

Because of this conception of politics, Cantor focused his attention on Yeats and Joyce, sons of Eire who are not generally noted for their political writing and who have never been lionized by the left. He believed that these great modernists "were constructing and celebrating worlds that could be recaptured only within the mind." Just as he aspired to do, they "wrote songs of survivors," elegies for fallen comrades who live in our collective memory. This is one reason why Cantor's taste runs to poetry and poetic prose and why he ignores political novels such as *The Possessed, Under Western Eyes, Bread and Wine, Darkness at Noon* and *Man's Fate.* It may also be that he perfers not to confront the profound ambivalence of political behavior that the distinguished authors of these books dramatized so unforget-

Dr. Congdon is professor of history at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

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tably. Unlike Cantor, they never mistook poetry for politics or literary tropes for the burden of history.

Like so many of his generation, Cantor is not at home in our historical world—if he cannot have apocalypse now, he will settle for a permanent revolution of consciousness. He has not, in short, changed very much since his student days. Although he now affects a soul-searching attitude, he has never re-examined the platitudes and self-righteous dicta that all but smothered reflection during that unhappy decade. He continues to believe that the war in Vietnam was for the benefit of "monopoly capitalism" and that there is no difference between soldiers of the U.S. Army and political terrorists. He still admires Marcuse and thinks Brown is to be taken seriously. In the final analysis, his is a heart that will always beat faster at the thought of a radically new world. To be sure, in an essay entitled "Twenty-Two (Broken) Notes on Samuel Beckett," he speaks of the necessity of abandoning hope, despair being the only proper response to the present age. Yet because he believes in the transvaluation of all values, for him despair is the contemporary form of hope. Tomorrow that hope may—indeed it must—take some new form, one projected by the creative artist as sublimated revolutionary. Cantor's forthcoming novel, we are advised, is entitled *The Death of Che Guevara.*

More an autobiographer than a literary critic, Cantor does nothing so much as rehearse his own and his generation's tragic destiny. Although he has rejected the cruder forms of Marxist exegesis, he still regards literature as an agency of change rather than an effort to deepen our understanding of what it means to be human. And if he seems to have defused his revolutionary activism, he persists in treating politics within the context of his own longing for liberation and transformation. As a result he is incapable of understanding that politics can never be a means of personal salvation and that its ethic must be one of responsibility, not of ultimate ends. Ever mindful of the possible consequences of his actions, the responsible political leader pursues not abstract dreams but concrete possibilities within a particular tradition of behavior. Because such a pursuit presupposes a profound knowledge and understanding of the past, it is history, not art, with which politics must be inextricably intertwined. Genuine politics is never the result of flights of creative imagination, but the fruit of sober historical experience.

Where Cantor is impressionistic and visionary, Robert C. Rosen is conventional and straightforward. Born in 1947, he, too, came of age during the 1960's, and his study of John Dos Passos constitutes a new-left critique of an old-left warrior turned conservative—or at least anticommunist. The focus of his book "is the very intersection of the political and literary, for it is the melding of these two impulses that produced Dos Passos's best work and their divergence that produced his worst." That Dos Passos's work always possessed a political cutting edge, no one will gainsay. The illegitimate son of a wealthy lawyer of Portuguese descent, he was educated at Harvard and traveled widely, serving as an ambulance driver during World War I. From his earliest years, he inclined to anarchism, a consequence no doubt of his Iberian heritage and his study of Pio Baroja's novels. Having fallen in with the Greenwich Village set during the early 1920's, Dos Passos was obsessed with the evils of capitalism, real and imagined, and for a time he harbored some sympathy for the Communist Party. Like other intellectuals of his acquaintance, he persuaded himself that Sacco and Vanzetti were innocent victims of a bigoted "system," and, after their execution in 1927, he began the trilogy for which he is principally remembered—*USA (The 42nd Parallel; 1919; The Big Money).* Because it was designated to be a critique of "monopoly capitalism," Rosen praises *USA,* but with Dos Passos's growing awareness of the left's indifference to liberty, our critic becomes more critical. He summons as experts such new-left historians as Staughton Lynd and Jesse Lemisch to help sustain his attack on Dos Passos's historical study of Jefferson, and he castigates the aging ex-radical's portrayal of alienated youth in *Midcentury.* Above all, he cannot forgive his subject for showing "no sympathy at all for New Leftists." Nothing, we are informed, "would revitalize him after he lost his early radical faith." We have before us ample evidence that Rosen has kept that faith; his pages are replete with radical jargon—"elitist sentiment," "repressive institutions," "dehumanized society," "sexism" and so forth.

To be sure, Rosen is right to identify *USA* as Dos Passos's finest work, but that achievement owes little to the anticapitalist animus that informs it. Indeed, it is not as a political novelist that Dos Passos commands our attention; his principal distinction is his historical consciousness and his love of the past. After World War II, at the latest, he was very much aware of this and began to describe himself as a writer of history, "the greatest of the literary arts." In *USA,* and again in *Midcentury,* we encounter what John Lukacs has rightly identified as a new genre: not a historical novel but, for want of a better name, a novelized history. Here history is not simply the background, it is the protagonist. In this, they are reminiscent of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *August 1914* and *Lenin in Zurich.* Excerpts from contemporary newspapers, observations (the "camera eye") and capsule biographies combine with fictional episodes to evoke a particular time and place: America during the first half of the 20th century.

It scarcely matters that Dos Passos conceived *USA* in a fit of ideological enthusiasm. Never a master of style, he possessed a genuine talent for showing us something about ourselves, especially in his finely etched miniatures of such historical figures as Wilson ("Meester Veelson") and Bryan, Debs and Big Bill Haywood, Carnegie and J.P. Morgan, Isadora Duncan and Rudolph Valentino, Veblen and Frank Lloyd Wright. And if

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Midcentury, the best of his later works, does not quite measure up to *USA,* it is still worth reading. In his perceptive portrait of actor James Dean ("The Sinister Adolescents"), for example, Dos Passos warned us of what was in store for the declining years of the American Century. Dean was the paradigmatic alienated youth: a rebel without a cause, contemptuous of all authority, resentful of any restraint, pampered, irresponsible. Less a person than a bundle of uncurbed appetites, he exemplified that insistent self-indulgence that has infected increasing numbers of Americans. Living in a land of peace and comfort, they believe that the liberties they enjoy are part of the natural order of things, dismissing out of hand any suggestion that the price of liberty might be eternal vigilance.

John Dos Passos died in 1970, deeply pessimistic about America's future; he had learned some hard lessons from his radical past. In a time of conservative revival, Professors Cantor and Rosen are pessimistic too, but for very different reasons—and they have learned very little. No longer young, they bear the scars of a divisive era in our nation's history, an era that still awaits its master historian. Perhaps only another chastened former radical like Dos Passos can meet that challenge. □

Routinely from Europe

Marguerite Yourcenar: *Fires;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

Günter Grass: *The Meeting at Telgte;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York.

by Gregory Wolfe

Some day, I hope Tom Wolfe writes a book about how literary pseudogiants are made. Let's suppose that a man with his grasp of broad cultural movements, his insider's knowledge and his detachment can trace the early agonies in the lonely garret, the first novel discovered by a talent-spotting avant-garde critic, the autograph parties and feature spreads in glossy weeklies, the oraclelike status of midcareer, the thoroughly researched retrospectives later. As Wolfe has shown in what he had to say about painting and architecture, the art giant is usually the product of Cultureburg, that small group of critics, professors, museum directors and progressive, upper-class patrons who fabricate the *Zeitgeist* and present it to the public as the only show in town.

Marguerite Yourcenar, we are told on the dust jacket of *Fires,* is the *first* woman to have been selected to the French Academy, and an imposing list of her books stands opposite the title page. The blurb for Günter Grass simply takes for granted the author's "lasting international fame" from his "quintessential post-Second World War novel," *The Tin Drum.* Grass is "also a Social Democrat actively involved in electoral politics, and a rousing speaker." The Seals of Approval are stamped clearly and unmistakably. And yet to leave the characterization of these two writers at that would be to do them an injustice. Not all "literary giants" are mere frauds; some *are* artists of skill and sensitivity. Both of these writers possess many of the qualities which have distinguished the national literatures of France and Germany: Mme. Yourcenar displays the old French preoccupation with the dark side of erotic love, and Grass explores the relations between past and present, between the health of literature and language as well as that of the social realm—interests typical of the German mind. But it is their adherence to the prevailing cultural orthodoxy that causes them to be lionized and makes their art ultimately unsatisfying.

Fires, Mme. Yourcenar writes in her preface, "is in the form of a collection of love poems, or, rather, is like a sequence of lyrical prose pieces connected by a notion of love." The book is the product of a "love crisis," we are told, and between each of the nine prose poems are short "notes for a private diary" written during that crisis. Each section is either a narrative or a monologue based on a character from Greek myth (except for Mary Magdalene); these mythical figures serve the author as "props through time" which aid in the expression of her notion of love. But she warns us that the characters are not bound to their original sources: Phaedra, for instance, is more Racine's character than Euripides'. Thus each piece reverberates with historical connotations and anachronisms; they are meant to mingle freely in a tight mythical form. And here is where Yourcenar's problems begin. The allusive and disjointed modern style lends itself to abuse. In Eliot, figures like Tiresias and Coriolanus are composites whose meaning depends on multiple connotations. But Eliot's use of allusion is controlled, and an average literary knowledge of the Bible, Virgil and Dante will suffice his reader. The danger, and this is where Mme. Yourcenar goes wrong, is that this style can become so obscure that it serves as a private set of images which have meaning only for the author. A work of art is a public act and must communicate its meaning intelligibly. Mme. Yourcenar acknowledges this when she admits that much of *Fires* contains "purely biographical residues."

This private aspect of *Fires* is directly related to what she calls its "almost excessive expressionism . . . a form of natural and needed confession." In both the mythical pieces and the diary fragments the interior experience of some aspect of love is conveyed, but the expressionistic emotion constantly threatens to distort the experience. This is a far cry from emotion recollected in tranquility, and thus little insight into the nature of love

Mr. Wolfe is an editor of Hillsdale Review, *currently at Mansfield College in Oxford, England.*

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is provided. We see Antigone's despair in the war-torn and decadent Thebes where the love of a brother for a sister is a crime, but Yourcenar's choice for justice (the will of divine love) is given no meaning; the overwhelming sense of futility and the imagery of death are all that remain in the mind after reading this piece. The failure of expressionism lies in its one-dimensionality: one can see only the angst—one can't get around or above it.

What is Mme. Yourcenar's "notion of love"? The love crisis from which she writes stems from "absolute love," which is both a "disease" and a "vocation." Later in her preface total love is said to involve humility (the only virtue mentioned), inevitable deception, latent violence and selfish demands. She says that this "mad, scandalous" love is permeated by the mystical power of transcendence, which exists only *within* human beings. Reference is made to "worshipping" the lover, and she even calls her lover God in the dairy. The religious overtones of the language are strikingly reminiscent of the medieval literature of courtly love, which originated in the songs of wandering French troubadors. The tradition of *amour courtois,* though it involved much that was obviously immoral, nonetheless attempted to mirror in romantic love the self-denial and virtue of the religious life. In the romances of that period, love is always seen as an ennobling and virtue-instilling experience. In Mme. Yourcenar's world, however, only the religious language remains, drained of all of its positive moral meaning. What is left is more akin to the dark gods of the blood of D.H. Lawrence, with the attendant deception, violence and selfishness. The deification of love has turned it into a demon. The true nature of love exists when the lover is turned toward the object of love—the spouse, God—and to that extent self is lost. When the love itself (or more narrowly, sexual intercourse) becomes the center, the lovers inevitably use each other for the sake of an ever-elusive experience. This is Mme. Yourcenar's world as she describes it in her diary notations:

> *Nothing dirtier than the ego.*
>
> *The only horror is not to be used. Turn me into whatever you want, even a screen, even a metallic conductor.*
>
> *God is everything that exceeds us, that got the better of us. Death is God, and the world, and the idea of God for the weak wrestler who lets himself be thrown by the [angels'] huge wingbeats. You are God: you could break me.*
>
> *Between us and death there is sometimes only the width of one single person. Remove this person and there would only be death.*

C.S. Lewis, in *The Four Loves,* puts it another way:

> The god [Eros] dies or becomes a demon unless he obeys God. It would be well if, in such case, he always died. But he may live on, mercilessly chaining together two mutual tormentors, each raw all over with the poison of hate-in-love, each ravenous to receive and implacably refusing to give, jealous, suspicious, resentful, struggling for the upper hand, determined to be free and to allow no freedom, living in 'scenes.' . . . The lovers' old hyperbole of 'eating' each other can come horribly near to the truth.

Though she would never see it in these terms, it is an apt summary of what Mme. Yourcenar's "notion of love" turns out to be.

There is an element of what one might call "self-indulgence" in modern literature, and it goes beyond the artist-as-everyman seeing universal truth through his own experience. When Shelley falls upon the thorns of life our attention is drawn to his bleeding, whining self rather than to what thorns mean and how to deal with them. Mme. Yourcenar's confessional style, where expressionism bleats out despair, locks us into a half-intelligible world. In Günter Grass's *The Meeting at Telgte,* self-indulgence takes the form of something very near to a political allegory in which Grass himself becomes one of the focuses of attention. As it is explained in the afterword by the British scholar Leonard Forster, *The Meeting at Telgte* is a projection into the past of a literary group to which Grass belonged in the years after World War II. This society, known as Group 47, was a gathering of German writers and critics who first met in 1947 amid the aftermath of the war. The leader of the group was Hans Werner Richter, and Grass dedicates the book to Richter. The group's purpose was to restore German society by restoring its language and literature.

The novel projects Group 47 into the 17th century (1647, to be exact), when the situation in Germany was much the same: devastated by brutal war, partitioned by opposing forces but united by a common language—the German of Luther—which was in the same anarchic desuetude as the country itself. The writers of Group 47, living in a country partitioned by the Western countries and by the Soviet Union, felt the need to hold an ironic position.

One fact about the novel is trumpeted from the dust jacket: Grass himself appears as the character Grimmelshausen, author of the satiric baroque novel *Simplicius Simplicissimus,* a role that apparently suits the "master of irony" who has "clowned his way to his nation's most serious truths." Both Grass and Gelnhausen (as the name is spelled in the novel) possess the "earthiness and ribald ironies" which "come as a peasant's rude truth." In *The Meeting at Telgte* Gelnhausen is a youthful, witty, self-conscious peasant who feels out of place among the great literary figures but is perfectly able to deal with the rambunctious courtesan-proprietress of the inn where the meeting takes place. After causing a major embarrassment he leaves

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in disgrace, but not before he has delivered a charming speech which impresses some of the conferees and vowed to write a great novel—which, of course, we know he does.

Gelnhausen is all too transparently Grass. When Chaucer or Dante appear in their own works, they are *personae* distinct from the author, and their clownishness or fallibility provides an insight into the truth that is the artist's concern. Gelnhausen is too close to Grass to be much more than self-indulgence, a reflection of the young Grass, who felt inadequate among the writers of 1947, and who went away to write *The Tin Drum,* which won the Group 47 prize in 1958. If there are any "rude peasant truths" (presumably opposed to bourgeois lies) uttered by Gelnhausen, I can't find them.

The same problem applies to the novel as a whole. Allegory can succeed only by depending on the reader's knowledge of the external system to which it corresponds, though it should also have a life of its own. The danger of allegory is that it may be read in a mechanical way, like a guidebook which explains every detail along the way. When this happens—that is, when allegory has no internal life of its own—reading becomes the working out of a puzzle rather than an important literary experience. This danger is even more real when the external system is restricted in scope; the reference in *The Meeting at Telgte* is not, say, the doctrines and concepts of the historic Christian faith (as in Bunyan), but the particular political situation of postwar Germany. Grass might deny that everything in his novel has a one-to-one correspondence with that situation, but the connection is awfully close, and his tendency to drift into banality or self-serving parallelism cripples the novel's effectiveness.

The last straw comes when, at the close of the meeting, the poets attempt to write an appeal for peace. Grass is appropriately ironic as he shows their first draft to be a hodgepodge of strident, ideological rhetoric and self-interested proposals. Good enough. But their finished version, albeit more moderate in tone and demands, sounds like the platform of the German Social Democratic Party. The town of Telgte is halfway between Protestant Osnabrück and Catholic Münster; or, reading the allegory, between the bourgeois, democratic West and the communist East. Grass emphasizes that both groups are solidly bourgeois and Protestant, but Telgte is a place of Catholic pilgrimages, and the destination of those pilgrimages is a miraculous Madonna (which one poet visits surreptitiously in a barn, where it is hidden from bands of marauding Protestants). The god that failed for men like Ignazio Silone—that of Soviet communism—remains alluring for Günter Grass and his SDP.

The gathering at Telgte comes to naught: the inn, with the appeal for peace still inside, burns to the ground. The commentator Leonard Forster claims that Grass is contrasting that 17th-century failure, where circumstances were overpowering, with the 20th-century success of Richter, Grass and Group 47. This would be a satisfying conclusion if one could accept that the modern German writers actually *are* restoring order to German society. But if Grass's novel is any indication, the situation is ominous indeed. □

Diplomacy in the Line of Fire

Frank J. Devine: *El Salvador: Embassy Under Attack;* Vantage Press*; New York.

by Benno W. Varon

In the summer of 1979, I spent a few days in San Salvador as the guest of Don Ernesto Liebes, Israel's Honorary Consul General and a coffee exporter. When he mentioned the name of the American ambassador, I pricked my ears: Frank J. Devine had been the second in command in the American embassy in Santo Domingo for part of the time I was stationed there as ambassador from Israel. That was in the mid-60's, when President Johnson decided to land 22,000 Marines in the Caribbean nation that had erupted in a murderous civil war. Those were dangerous days for foreign diplomats, and the danger created a bond among those who were caught in the events, and I was delighted at the prospect of seeing my colleague again.

Mr. Liebes accompanied me. I noticed some guards standing at the entrance to the embassy residence, but I can't remember anything ominous in the ensuing conversation. Of course, Ambassador Devine knew that I was an old hand in Latin American affairs, and that whatever he mentioned would fall under what is called in Spanish *los gajes del oficio,* the unpleasantnesses that go with the job. He seemed remarkably calm, a civil servant who was doing his duty without any attempt at dramatizing his situation.

One month after my departure, I received word that Ernesto Liebes had been kidnapped by leftist terrorists. At the time they were called just that. This denomination changed when their hit-and-run operations led to a full-fledged civil war; they were upgraded to guerrillas. Mr. Liebes's kidnapping was part of a fund-raising operation: the Salvadoran terrorists filled their war chest by exacting ransoms from kidnapped busi-

*Judging from the publisher's imprint, Ambassador Devine could not find one American publisher who would endorse his devastating testimony against the Central American left. He thus had to finance the publication of his book himself. (Ed.)

Mr. Varon, now retired, is a former newsman and was Israel's Ambassador to the Dominican Republic.

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ness executives. Liebes had told me that he had set aside $1-million in case he was kidnapped. He appeared to be not overly frightened by the prospect. He was over 70, not in good health and, although his family was living abroad, he said: "This is the country where I arrived as a young man, where I succeeded in business, and where I made my home. I'm not going to desert it now." As it turned out, Liebes had underestimated the appetites of potential kidnappers; they demanded a $10-million ransom. Not every well-to-do businessman has this much money, and still fewer have it readily available. There were negotiations; Liebes tried to convince the leader of the group that he was an independent businessman without corporate backing. He had the books of his firm delivered so that his captors could check the state of his finances. In the midst of this bargaining he suddenly suffered a mild heart attack. The terrorists panicked. Fearing that he would die before they could collect any ransom, they executed him. Cruelty? No, cold business acumen. They had, at the time, four other business executives in captivity. By killing Liebes, who had presented a problem in achieving their ransom demands, they sent a warning to those who negotiated on behalf of the other four.

This was my first encounter, though by proxy, with the Salvadoran terrorists who currently battle the government of that Central American nation. It did not endear them to me. I must confess to a bias. I cannot sympathize with them, nor with all those liberals and leftists in this country, or abroad, who root for their victory. Whenever I hear the Salvadoran government accused of violations of human rights, or of tolerating such violations, I can't help thinking that assassins of the left get more lenient treatment by the world's liberal establishment than assassins of the right.

Frank Devine retired in 1980, and in 1981 published a memoir of his days in that embattled country, *El Salvador: Embassy Under Attack*. He was stationed there from 1977 to 1980, a period during which El Salvador was beginning to degenerate into Latin America's top trouble spot. Those were the years of kidnappings for ransom, seizures of public buildings and churches by leftist mobs, occupations of foreign embassies (20 out of the country's 28), and killings of selected individuals, mostly by leftist terrorists. Government repression was, in the spirit of that nation's history, "heavy handed," as Devine calls it, and caused trouble with human-rights groups and

legislators in the United States. During Devine's stay, one government was overthrown in a bloodless coup, one revolutionary governing junta that emerged was replaced by another, land reform was started and numerous well-meaning attempts to solve the brewing crisis failed. Devine doesn't claim to have all the answers or any answers at all. He quotes a Chilean diplomat: "El Salvador is beset with problems—and they are all insoluble." Devine just points out the facts: it's a country the size of Massachusetts with over 5 million inhabitants, whose wealth is concentrated in a few hands (though not precisely in the so-called fourteen families), but which also had developed a middle class. The wealthy, many of whom had expatriated out of fear of kidnapping, were understandably unwilling to part with their wealth, and the leftist terrorists, or guerrillas, were equally uninterested in reform: they wanted revolution. El Salvador has witnessed a continuous coming and going of American factfinders and troubleshooters, and many well-intentioned projects doomed from inception because neither the right nor the left want a compromise solution: they want victory—the destruction of the opponent. Devine presents many details which illustrate this situation, but *tout comprendre c'est tout pardoner* just doesn't apply here. El Salvador is no place to collect laurels, whatever one's mission, and no position or title is a safe-conduct: an archbishop is gunned down at the altar, priests and nuns are murdered, ambassadors are kidnapped and killed. No holds are barred in this nation gone berserk, where there are innocents but no knights in shining armor. Only the coffin carpenters would prosper, if the assassins cared about the burial of their victims. Meanwhile, the United States tries to support a political center which no longer exists.

Frank Devine is an accomplished foreign-service man. While he undoubtedly has preferences, they hardly show through. If foreign-news correspondents were to report with equal impartiality, the public would be better informed. Nor is he one to excoriate his superiors. The reader may determine that Devine was not always exhilarated about instructions that were aimed at satisfying the human-rights lobby, but nowhere does he directly say so. The whole book is low key, which is all the more remarkable since it deals with so inflamatory a topic. Devine tells the story of diplomats who serve their country in danger spots, and even one who is destined for a peaceful country is now not immune to a crackpot's bullet. Diplomacy has ceased to be champagne and caviar. It's a demanding profession, one of the most dangerous around, and Devine had the distinction of being called in a major American newspaper "the most heavily guarded American Ambassador" of the time. Prior to being named Ambassador to El Salvador, the expert in Latin affairs was acting deputy assistant Secretary of State. The ambassadorship was supposed to be the crowning achievement of his career.

When Devine returned from his final briefing before departing for El Salvador, he received a message to return immediately to the State Department. There he was met by representatives of

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the F.B.I., C.I.A., Defense Intelligence Agency, Threat Assessment Group, Office of Central American Affairs, and others. He was told that intelligence reports indicated "that some ultra-conservatives in El Salvador in concert with . . . elements of the security forces had concluded that the United States' mistaken view of human rights conditions . . . could best be corrected by having the 'communists' assassinate the new American Ambassador upon his arrival. . . . To achieve this, they would arrange for such an assassination . . . and would insure that responsibility for it was credibly attributed to the ultra-Left." This was the "well-educated and attractive class of people," friendly to the United States. Devine was assured that the decision to proceed was up to him. If he decided in favor, he had to postpone his departure, since the details of his and his family's arrival had long been public knowledge. Plans had to be changed and kept confidential, and he would have to travel under an assumed name. Only two hours before the plane landed in San Salvador, the Foreign Ministry was informed. Thus the new American ambassador entered El Salvador via the service entrance.

Two special security agents accompanied the family, equipped with seventeen pieces of luggage containing weapons, gas masks, bulletproof vests, radiocommunications equipment and related paraphernalia. The agents were supposed to stay for a week, but new events delayed their departure. It soon appeared obvious that the militant left also had designs on the new ambassador. The FPL (Popular Liberation Forces "Farabundo Marti") had decided that the newly arrived American ambassador "represented the absolute trump card . . . in its campaign to free the political prisoners." Devine describes the situation:

> From this point forward we lived in a constant competition between enemy moves to close in on me and Embassy moves to make this impossible. . . . My photograph was circulated to FPL agents. . . . Externally, FPL agents began to study the layout of the [Embassy] premises. . . . Internally, they penetrated the groundfloor . . . in the guise of visa applicants. . . . Our own defensive build-up was quite visible to our enemy and in fact depended, for its efficiency, on the concept of deterrence.

The two security guards stayed on and were reinforced. He always drove in a three-car motorcade: first a sedan with highly visible gun ports, then the ambassador's bulletproof, bombproof Cadillac, and then a huge armored van. The route was never the same two days in succession. The "Zones of Vulnerability," i.e. the end or beginning of the route, the embassy chancery and the embassy residence, were covered by guards who would give the approaching motorcade advance radio clearance.

Of course, Mrs. Devine and the children also required protection. And, incredible as it may sound, they all adjusted to it. Only an American ambassador could live, under the circumstances, a halfway normal life, to such a degree that I did not detect any unusual tension when I visited Devine two years after his arrival.

Perhaps it was the fact that he had been the intended victim of assassination or kidnapping attacks by the extreme right and the extreme left which accounted for the remarkable evenhandedness of Devine's reporting. Some representatives of the human-rights lobby were critical of embassy procedures and of "our [un]willingness to automatically accept the leftist version over the rightist one of events transpiring in El Salvador." Following the instructions of the Carter administration, Devine would press within meetings of the diplomatic corps for a collective stand on human-rights violations. But none of his colleagues, the papal nuncio included, would side with him. They considered such a policy "intervention in the internal affairs of El Salvador." Others, both within and outside the diplomatic corps, felt that human rights were being misapplied for the political ends of some groups to change governments of which they did not approve.

As time went on, one embassy after another was occupied by leftist mobs that

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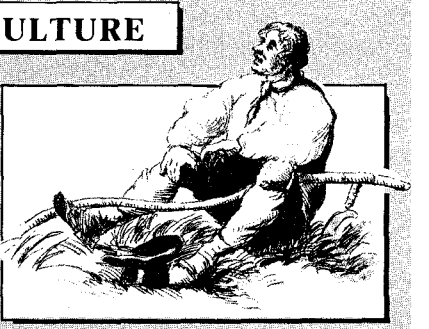
'Wipe That Smile Off of Your Face'



It is commonly thought that Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a wedding entertainment, something to keep the guests amused when the band took a break. Be that as it may, the confluence of Oberon, Titania, Bottom, Puck, et al. is truly funny. At least we thought it was. According to the movie "critic" for the *Chicago Tribune*, in his review of Woody Allen's latest whimsy:

> Truly funny comedies upset the social order.

Let's see: that eliminates *Twelfth Night*, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Sheridan, Wilde, the entire Feydeau—the funniest of them all—and countless other works of literature, written and performed, that don't drive their auditors to acts of civil disobedience from the top rank. And, of course, all Keaton, Groucho and Laurel & Hardy had in mind were barricades in the streets and marches in Washington, D.C. □

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kept the ambassador and his staff as hostages. Walls were heightened at the American chancery and embassy residence, iron gates were reinforced, the walls were topped with barbed wire, and heavier gates were installed. "We were all a little nervous," is the rare admission of the otherwise unflappable ambassador. The occupation of embassies was only one facet of an increasing lawlessness, and every law-enforcement effort by the government was promptly labeled "repression" by the opposition and its adherents abroad.

While on a short visit to Washington, Devine met a colleague who exclaimed, "Ambassador Devine! The last person I thought to see alive!" Well, security measures which only a financial world power could afford had frustrated the designs of both ultraleft and ultraright. But his embassy was shot at. On one occasion 200 marchers tried to scale its gate and picket fence with ladders, and as the Marines launched tear gas against them, the mob opened fire on the Marines. A bomb was detonated outside the gate of the embassy residence, and the building was strafed with automatic weapons.

When, as they were finally returning to the United States, the door of the plane closed behind them, Devine says: "Suddenly I felt as though a great weight had been lifted from my shoulders. . . . I realized that I had always wondered how it would end, whether Barbara and I would emerge alive." This is the only admission that Frank Devine was, after all, human and worried. But there is not a single hint of self-pity in the book. Soldiers get an occasional medal. Old diplomats are allowed to fade away. □

Dialectics and Delusions

James R. Green: *The World of the Worker: Labor in Twentieth-Century America;* Hill and Wang; New York.

***Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches;* Edited by Ellen Carol DuBois; Schocken Books; New York.**

by Edward J. Lynch

When he developed dialectical analysis, Hegel provided thinkers of the caliber of Marx and Lenin with historical rationale for the political courses that they would advocate. Coincidentally, he provided a vehicle through which third-rate minds of succeeding periods could write formula history.

In the hands of a competent analyst, dialectical reasoning looks to the competing parties, considers the rationale offered by the opponents for their positions, then deliberates the tension underlying that opposition. The skilled hand points to a logical synthesis of the conflict, usually a result that neither adversary planned or favored. In the hands of hacks, or those who have not coherently thought through their analyses, dialectics results in an account of one side of the struggle; it identifies the players while ignoring the reasons (after all, conscious reasons are epiphenomenal, and true motivation is always material), and predicts the eventual victory of one of the combatants. Following the conquest of those who are now dominated, all shall live in some form of bliss.

James R. Green offers his readers a generous serving of labor-movement history that provides a textbook example of the truncations possible in hack dialectics. Green is a half-conscious student of Marx whose work reflects a belief that one need never be more than half-informed. He is writing the history of workers, so he need not learn anything about economics or historical contexts. The only animating principle of human experience involves material urges. Accordingly, managers and business classes have the existing material resources, the working class wants those resources, and labor history consists of a recollection of the successes and failures of organized labor in its efforts to transfer "society's" wealth from the party of current ownership to the party that will rule after the revolution.

In short, Mr. Green tells half of the story of American economic history. A complete rendition would have required him to set his figures in context, reminding people that wages that would not reach poverty levels today sufficed to build the middle class a generation ago, as Mr. Green's parents probably could have told him. A complete rendition would have included some explanation for the expansion of the labor force throughout American history, so that the economy could accommodate the influx of immigrants and provide jobs for our own expanding population. Above all, he might have considered some other societies for examples of those upon whom workers come to depend when governments prevent entrepreneurs from performing capitalist activities. Green bears the marks of indoctrination in contemporary universities, so we must assign him credit for some awareness of his intellectual roots. His book is the caliber of work expected for tenure under the publish-or-perish rule and few other than his students will ever read it. His tome richly merits such puny influence.

Ms. DuBois has rendered a service, however, by collecting the writings, speeches and correspondence of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Both of these women have influenced the course of American history, and their words deserve serious examination. Too many people believe that today's antifeminists are fabricating the charges that have been voiced against women's self-proclaimed liberators.

Stanton and Anthony had no idea of the dialectical tone of their writings, but the formula comes through. Where

Dr. Lynch is a special assistant in the Office of Policy and Resource Management of the EPA.

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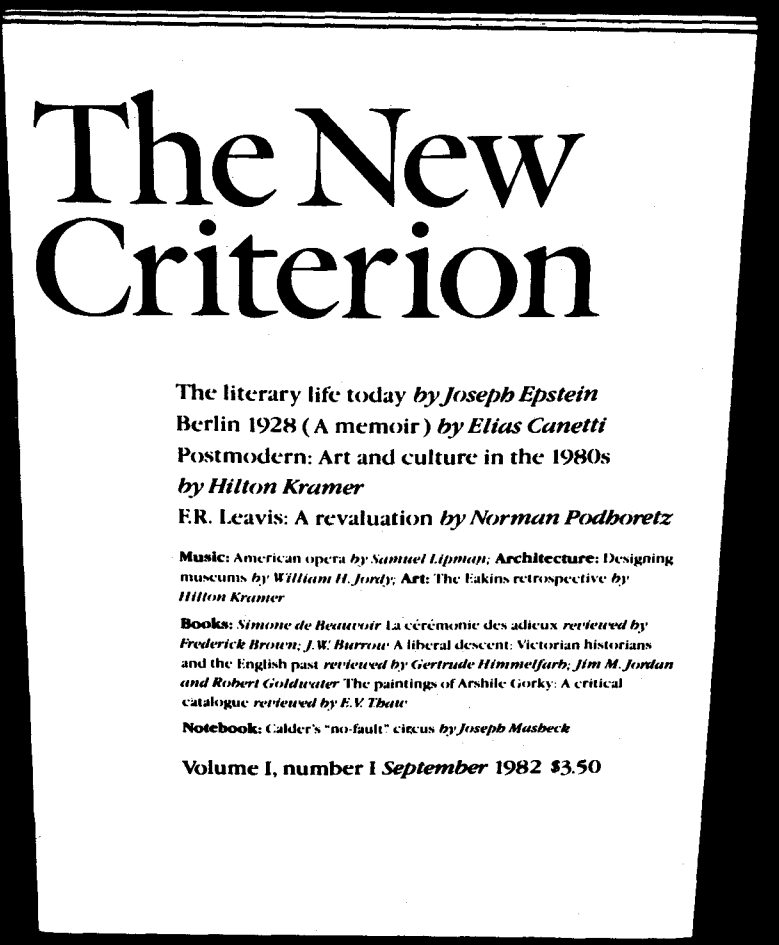
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Marx divided the world into proletariat and bourgeoisie, Stanton and Anthony use the distinction between men and women, which predates Marx, as their key social dividing line. These feminists are quite American in their approach to historical and political analysis. Early on, they embraced a natural-rights basis for their insistence that, because the Creator made all of us equal, both men and women should be accorded the right to vote. In the period following the Civil War, when the franchise was formally granted to blacks, one might expect that such insistence upon the equal status of women would have found a receptive ear. Had they limited themselves to this natural-rights argument, the suffrage movement might have won this goal much more quickly than the seventy years that it took.

But since they ventured beyond the natural-rights position, Stanton, Anthony and their sister suffragettes were accused of being hostile to the family, to the Christian religion, and they faced several similar diversions from the question of the right to vote. Why? Their own words demonstrate that the women brought it on themselves. Although only men would vote on the question of women's suffrage, Stanton and Anthony painted a rather disturbing picture of the male sex as they chased the franchise. When asked why they sought to vote, Stanton would offer, as her first reason, a desire to liberate women from their drunken husbands through "reform" of the divorce laws. She repeatedly referred to the male sex as a species of stinking drunkards who lacked the virtue appropriate to the power that they exercised. When confronted with the suggestion that the Bible offered no support for her preference for female rule, Stanton did not smooth feathers by responding that the American Constitution prohibits religious tests for office, or by noting that ours is a secular, rather than a religious, society. Instead, this precursor of modern feminism wrote her own critical edition of the first four chapters of Genesis, unwittingly adding strength to charges that, to accommodate her demands, one would have to reverse the teachings of the Bible. With such leadership, few movements require enemies.

Proponents of the dialectic usually conclude their analyses with an account of history that enumerates the ruling forces of previous periods and predicts future patterns of domination. Marxian class analysis moves from periods of nobles and serfs to the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, to the classless society. Stanton's feminist bible offered allegations of a once-dominant matriarchate, an account of the evils of the current patriarchate, and a promise that all would be bliss under the emerging "Amphiarchate." Those who employ this brand of dialectic tend to discount the role of reason as an influence on human conduct, so they rarely bother to explain why the next period of rule will develop according to their predictions. Viewing history as a succession of struggles, most dialecticians concede that the next phase will not develop peacefully. Marx's dictatorship of the proletariat, after all, depended upon the annihilation of the bourgeoisie. Ms. Stanton's "Amphiarchate" would appear to depend upon the termination of those drunken men

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

Brainwashing in America

"The trouble with the Kafkaesque perspective is that it is existentialism's main cop-out. According to Sartre, existential man is totally free to be whatever he chooses. He is the animal that names himself, he calls the shots, in fact, he brings whatever essence he prefers into his own Being. This goes much further than Jack London or Mark Twain telling us that morals are less important than a good steak; when they strip off civilization, we are at least left with instinct and power and animal vitality. The existentialist has made it imperative that 'modern man' generate his entire identity from Nothingness. London's creed attempted to abdicate moral responsibility by appealing to the survival of the fittest. Kafka's world demands that man accept his responsibility even for his instincts."

from "Between Yukon and Prague"
by Keith Bower

"Plath and Sexton are indeed distinguished poets, but their worth must be predicated on something other than the severed artery and the lacerated heart."

from "Poetry of Personal Misfortune"
by Robert C. Steensma

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Waste of Money—Perceptibles—The American
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who managed the patriarchate of her day. Most Americans are uncomfortable with the clashing style that they usually associate with such dialectical analysis. The Declaration of Independence assumes a natural equality at the beginning of society, but it does not posit that equality as an end to be pursued at all costs. Indeed, when our Founders deigned to speak of the goals of government, the first function that they addressed was the protection of diverse and unequal talents for acquiring property. We are equals at the origin, and retain the rights of natural equality, but, among free people, differences (i.e., "inequalities") will develop. One cannot "achieve" equality without abolishing the differences that give rise to inequalities. Governments that aim at such establishments of equality have proven incapable of tolerating human liberty.

One can learn from Green and DuBois, but not the lessons that they would prefer to teach. They praise the idea of equality, but what they really mean is leveling—that is, equality only in a material sense—as a goal of society. Their hostility to those whom they see as current rulers, however, indicates that their deeper passion is revenge. Equality would be established by tearing down, rather than by building up. The most important objection to their arguments is that such prescriptions are inconsistent with any ordered liberty among natural equals. □

Between Language & Psychoanalytical Myths

Jean-Paul Sartre: *The Family Idiot: Gustave Flaubert 1821-1857;* The University of Chicago Press; Chicago

by Maura Daly

Jean-Paul Sartre's avowed purpose in writing *The Family Idiot* was to answer the perennial question, "what . . . can we know about a man?" With the creator of *Madame Bovary* as guinea pig, Sartre proceeds to examine Flaubert's life in 627 pages of verbose psychoanalytic and linguistic mumbo jumbo. Carol Cosman, the translator of the American edition, seeks to excuse this deficiency: "the work [*The Family Idiot*] written in a race against time—and encroaching blindness—[is] . . . barely edited at all." One recalls Alphonse Daudet, who is reputed to have apologized to his editor: "Sir, I didn't have the time to make it short." Beyond his serpentine phrases, the very *raison d'être* of Sartre's opus is shrouded in fog. Sartre tells the reader at the beginning that his reasons for choosing Flaubert are personal, stemming originally from an antipathy which later turned to empathy. He does not, however, specify *what* these personal reasons were, and this seems to be the lost key. Surely it is no accident that Sartre chose to write about Flaubert, the father of modern French literature. Flaubert, like Balzac, and many 19th- and 20th-century authors after them, used words as the medieval alchemist used metals. They hoped that with the unceasing sifting of syllables they could discover the philosopher's stone, that their prose would call into being, would hold, possess, *be,* and not merely exist as a linguistic representation. It is in Flaubert's work that one sees for the first time the desire to make words, language and literature into an absolute. Flaubert was the first modern writer to realize the impossibility of this quest, although four of his novels—*Madame Bovary, Salammbô, The Temptation of Saint Anthony* and *Bouvard and Pécuchet*—implicitly attest to his feverish desire to find an absolute in language. It is appropriate that Sartre picked Flaubert as his subject since the latter's inability to find that absolute parallels Sartre's own unfruitful efforts. Sartre is still loath to relinquish his claims for the transcendence of language; he must therefore explain Flaubert's poor relationship with language, which, according to Sartre's psychoanalytic analysis, has its roots in Gustave's passive relationship with his mother and with the rest of his family:

> Ennui—this is the malaise. It is the living out of nonvalorization. From this we shall easily understand that Gustave entered the world of language at an oblique angle.

In his vindication of language, Sartre convicts Flaubert: "Little Gustave's misfortune is that something inside prevents him from grasping words as simple signs. . . . Gustave's naiveté, because it persists, indicates that he could not fully perform his task; he learns to decode the message, of course, but not to question its contents." Finally, Sartre adds, "Meaning is not important, it is the verbal materiality that fascinates him." Obviously, all this seems a bit strong. If the work of one of the Occident's greatest novelists is based upon an essential misconception of language, where does this leave writers of lesser talent—to say nothing of mere scriveners?

Sartre's defense of language, however, is vehement. Once again commenting on Flaubert's misunderstanding of language, he observes, "He persists in thinking that the spoken word corrodes and can never completely define." Later, Sartre maintains, "Silence is itself a verbal act, a hole dug in language and which, as such, can be maintained only as a virtual nomination whose sense is defined by the totality of the work." For Sartre everything, even silence, is language and is defined in terms of language: there is *No Exit.*

This, then, is the key to Sartre's massive undertaking. Although the

Dr. Daly is professor of French literature at the University of Notre Dame.

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book is ostensibly an effort to establish the person and the literary persona of Gustave Flaubert, its real purpose is to plead the case for the immanence of language. Sartre is not so much in search of Flaubert as for something in the life or career of Flaubert that would allow Sartre to resolve his own philosophical conundrums. Like many modern literary critics, Sartre is an aficionado of the "springboard technique": he no longer really discusses the author or his work, although the project is undertaken in his name.

The question of language is explicitly the subject of the first chapter, entitled "A Problem," and implicitly that of the following six chapters. We are treated to Sartre's exhaustive analysis of the various relationships of the Flaubert family—all blithely reconstituted more than a century after the fact. In the second chapter, "The Father," Sartre recounts Achille Flaubert's meteoric rise from peasant to the most esteemed surgeon in Rouen, his brilliance, his pride and the rigid way that he demanded that the entire family imitate and serve him. Next, the reader is introduced to the mother, née Caroline Fleuriot, who had been an orphan since the age of ten. Sartre informs us that she was slavishly devoted to her husband whom she saw as a father figure and who demanded utter submission and obedience. According to Sartre, when Gustave was slow to learn his letters Achille blamed his wife, and she, in turn, blamed the boy for being the source of her husband's displeasure. The fourth chapter discusses Gustave's older brother, Achille, their father's namesake and imitator. Achille, unlike his younger brother, was a brilliant student and a respected surgeon, his father's alter ego, through whose existence he was assured of immortality. It was Achille, rather than more experienced colleagues of Doctor Flaubert senior, who operated on him when a growth was discovered. Doing some fancy Freudian footwork with the theories of reciprocity and sublimation, Sartre concludes that, because of the symbiotic relationship between father and son, the father operates on himself. I, for one, find this assertion very interesting; it seems to me that Sartre is doing the same thing with this book —supposedly dedicated to Flaubert. In effect, Sartre operates on Flaubert in an attempt to heal Sartre.

In the last chapter Sartre returns to the question of language and literature, this time under the guise of a discussion of the two opposing ideologies which were open to Flaubert. He maintains that Flaubert's choice was between faith, which came from his mother, and scientism, which came from his father. Flaubert, unfortunately, was unable to believe in either and vented his skepticism in his novels. Concerning this conflict, Sartre observes:

> Gustave was not content just to live his unhappy condition as younger son; he had to ponder it. By this I do not mean either that he understood it objectively or that he made a theory out of it; I mean simply that he believed he was clarifying it by discourse—when on the contrary he was obscuring and mythifying it.

I would level a similar accusation at Sartre: I think that he does understand his unhappy condition, i.e. his inability to accept language as a nonabsolute, and that in trying to clarify the question in *The Family Idiot* he comes up with a theory which, rather than elucidating the problem, obscures and mythifies it. Despite its plethora of detail and abundance of fact, *The Family Idiot* is in no way a biography. In fact, the whole text is so interspersed with psychoanalytic analysis, linguistic animadversions, and philosophical conjectures that the reader can easily forget the ostensible subject: Flaubert. □

Passions in Britain

It seems that we may have been too quick to write off England as a society where red-blooded passion, so necessary for sustaining a robust sense of living, has evaporated from human souls and deeds. During this century Britain—once the environment where Lady MacBeth, Sir Francis Drake, Henry Morgan, and Lord Byron imbibed the taste of violence with their mothers' milk—has acquired an image of a land of idyllic apathy where no one transcends the paradigms of phlegmatic courteousness, and war, like barbarianism, is relegated to the forgotten annals. The Faulkland incident made the first dent in that cherished image. Now comes news of geriatric crime that is apparently flourishing in the bucolic cottages of Devon. Here is what Home Office has to say on the subject:

> Certainly some of the most violent murders with hammers and things I have seen have involved old people in their 70's and 80's.
>
> One man of 85 killed his wife because she was having an affair with the young man next door, who was 69. He hit her 37 times in the head with a *hammer*.

There will always be an England. □

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In earlier epochs, a critic tormented only the writers...

Of all the cants which are canted in this canting world—though the cant of hypocrites may be the worst—the cant of criticism is the most tormenting.

Laurence Sterne

In ours, he torments everybody.

Recently a middle-aged father published a book about his sordid adventures in massage parlors, wife-swapping communes and the worlds of easy sex and prostitution. The critics were grateful to Gay Talese. *Newsweek* said that "Talese's research has an awesome solidity about it." *Vogue* was proud of "... Gay's triumph over the puritanical strictures of Ocean City, strictures that so inhibited him that he didn't even masturbate until his second year in college." And the *Chicago Tribune* – a newspaper respectable primarily in its own eyes—turned its enthusiasm into promotion by running excerpts of *Thy Neighbor's Wife* for Chicagoland families to read.

The state of literary criticism today strongly confirms Laurence Sterne's warning: the cant of criticism *is* the most tormenting. To make things worse, the modern media have transformed the critic into a midwife of mass consciousness. Regardless of what we wish to know or ignore, we live with cultural events and their consequences —as interpreted by the modern critic. Sadly, what passes for "cultural criticism" in *Time, Esquire, Chicago Tribune, Ladies Home Journal,* et al., amounts to an elitist, moral shoddiness.

The Critical Difference

In *Chronicles of Culture,* we feel there is a need for a counterpoise to those who judge cultural offerings without giving any thought to the impact of messages which are liberated from all codes of moral and intellectual responsibility. We firmly believe that culture, books, movies, behavioral trends—their meaning and success—deeply affect man's preferences and, consequently, his sense of moral and social order. We are not timid when we confront the liberal cultural cant. *The National Review* remarked that we, *"Go for the jugular. . . . Chronicles* reports on the reporters, and reviews the reviewers. Its verdicts have not been kind."

The Critical Response

In every issue, we challenge the dominant cultural establishment on what it preaches about culture, politics and social matters. Malcolm Muggeridge observed that "... in *Chronicles of Culture* the Consensus assumptions—that the *New York Times* is a great newspaper, that the South Africans are uniquely the villains of our time, that President Reagan is an idiot, that all good men and true build their hopes on disarmament talks with Mr. Brezhnev, etc. etc. etc.—are blissfully absent." Tom Wolfe said about our work, "It has been a pleasure to watch Leopold Tyrmand and the *Chronicles of Culture* confront—à la Orwell—the smelly little orthodoxies of our time." And from the *London Times,* "... it is a relief to receive an American publication which puts forward another view. . . . [*Chronicles*] displays a pleasantly open and ironic position. . . . Who, among the liberal monopoly of power in this sphere, will reply to Tyrmand?"

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Sanity as a Given

Maurice Friedmann: ***Martin Buber's Life and Work, Vol. 1, The Early Years 1878–1923;*** **E.P. Dutton; New York.**

Ellis Sandoz: ***The Voegelinian Revolution: A Biographical Introduction;*** **Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge.**

by Will Morrisey

Education defines political life more fully than brute power does. Admit that "Of the gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can." The real questions remain: Which gods? Which men? Ruling for what purpose? The kind of education they put forth will tell us.

Education reveals purpose not only in subject matter and in doctrine but also in the tension between teacher and student. In tyrannies this tension consists mostly of fear; in democracies, it often consists of egoism and unplatonic *eros;* the best regime would encourage the loving tension between a genuine teacher and a genuine student. The possible effects of the latter tension can be seen in these two books by attentive students whose teachers reward attention.

In their teaching, Martin Buber and Eric Voegelin embody the principles that reproach the false teachings of propaganda and seduction. Buber's celebrated "I-Thou" and Voegelin's similar "metaxy" both arise from the experience of glad learning and teaching. Both men oppose the same enemy, too. In *Paths in Utopia,* Buber observes that the decline of religion, the traditional frame of education, did not eliminate dreams of paradise: "the whole force of dispossessed eschatology was converted into utopia at the time of the French revolution," a utopia Marxists tried to win by conquest—by means of the "I-It" instead of the "I-Thou." Voegelin condemns the modern attempt to "immantentize the eschaton," to *make* with human hands paradise in this world. Education, religion, politics: each reveals the same problem in a different way. The problem of subject and object confronts teachers and students, gods and men, rulers and ruled, would-be conquerors and supposed slaves. Buber and Voegelin would overcome the problem without destroying the tension.

Maurice Friedmann shows us Buber's life and work leading to the publication of *I and Thou.* Although labeled a mystic, Buber was no such thing; Friedmann shows that Buber never undertook mysticism's project, transcending the world by uniting with God. Buber regarded this world as the place to encounter God. The "I-Thou" means refusing to regard nature, men, and spirit as objects to be owned or used (the "I-It"). "I-Thou" means the kind of participation *with* the other that a sentence cannot state but which lovers know. In describing this, Friedmann refuses to let us imagine that Buber's love partook of sentimentality. He quotes Buber's recollection of Lou Salome, the veteran seductress who claimed numerous intellectuals: "Every man fell in love with her, but I didn't." He knew the limits of genuine love, too: "even love cannot persist in direct relation; it endures but only in the alternation of actuality and latency."

Curiously, despite his intellectual power, Buber ruled out the love philosophers know. He calls intellect a "parasite" of nature, contending that reason's law, the law of noncontradiction, requires the separation that makes the "I-It" inevitable. He admits that he never experienced Plato's *eros* for ideas. If Buber sounds as much Christian as Jewish, it is because in a way he was. "From my youth onward," he wrote, "I have found in Jesus my great brother." The "communal immediacy" of early Christianity superseded the legalism of the Judaism that Jesus encountered. Buber never flirted with conversion, however, as he considered true Christianity a revival of true Judaism, and never believed Jesus to be divine. To Buber, the "I-Thou" of love forms the core of both religions.

Love, intensely private, translates into the realities of public life only with difficulty. Buber had the courage to try to make such a transition while engaged not only in writing but also in political practice. In *I and Thou* he does not attempt to ignore economic and political reality: "Man's will to profit and will to power are natural and legitimate as long as they are tied to the will to human relations and carried by it. . . . The statesman or businessman who serves the spirit is no dilettante," as he tries to define the limits of spirit and will "every day anew, according to the right and measure of that day." The theory needs an example that Buber never gives. But Friedmann supplies a telling one. After World War I, he recounts, Buber resumed the Zionist activities that had involved him for most of his life. He hoped that Palestinian Jews, practicing the "I-Thou," could live harmoniously with Palestinian Arabs instead of "turn[ing] them into sworn enemies." Friedmann sees this as prophetic, for "the situation had not yet polarized . . . into Zionism and anti-Zionism." Given the characteristics of Islam, one may doubt that polarity was avoidable. Evidently, Buber's colleagues also had their doubts. At the Twelfth Zionist Congress in 1921, Buber wrote a resolution calling for Arab-Jewish unity in Palestine. It was amended into innocuousness. Friedmann quotes his teacher:

> My role as a 'politician,' i.e., a man who takes part in the political activity of a group was finished. . . . [H]enceforth I would not start anything where I had to choose between the truth as I saw it and what was actually being achieved.

Mr. Morrisey is associate editor of Interpretation.

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But that choice must be made by statesmen and businessmen every day. It requires a homely subspecies of the rationality Buber rejects—what Plato's translators call prudence or practical wisdom.

Paths in Utopia ends with praise for the *kibbutzim*. Nevertheless, the "I-Thou" did save Buber from state socialism, the only practicing "communism," which yields community only by uniting workers against the "workers' state." Among socialists, this sober and decent view can only serve the cause of sanity—and among socialists, sanity must always be a cause, the object of a crusade, for it is surely not a given.

For Voegelin, sanity is very much a given, albeit one that much of humanity prefers to suppress. Like many who survived Weimar and the nazis, he insists that a constitutional order must rule—*rule*—in practice as well as on paper, or it may fall to one who will rule without constitutional restraint. He considers practical wisdom "a compact type of rationality" necessary to any sound political action.

In discussing Solon, Voegelin observes that while a statesman must share "the passions *of* the people" in order to make himself politically acceptable, he can only act with authority *for* them if "in his soul these passions [have] submitted to the universal order" apprehended by reason or by faith. Voegelin criticizes those who would simply override ordinary passions. In the fourth volume of *Order and History,* he observes:

> The counsels of the Sermon [on the Mount] originate in the spirit of eschatological heroism. If they were followed by the Christian layman to the letter among men as they are, they would be suicidal. . . . Since the Sermon is unbearable in its purity, the Church infuses as much of its substance as men are capable of absorbing while living in the world; the mediation of the stark reality of Jesus to the level of human expediency, with minimum loss of substance, is one of the functions of the Church.

He applauds this "Pauline, ecclesiastic compromise with the frailty of man."

Despite the founding of the Church, the Christian Fathers failed to arrange a sufficient number of prudent compromises. They "did not understand that Christianity could supersede polytheism but not abolish the need of a civil theology." Their failure left politics vulnerable to those who would give the people a political belief system that refers not to divinity but to the passions. Voegelin calls this system by its first post-Christian name: "Gnosticism."

"Gnostics," Voegelin writes, "will not leave the transfiguration of the world to the grace of God beyond history but will do the work of God himself, right here and now, in history"; they would replace the "theophanic" world of Athens and Jerusalem with an "egophanic" world. Voegelin sees the heirs of this doctrine as the dominant voices in modern ideological-political life. Sandoz, who persuaded Voegelin to record a valuable memoir for use in this book, quotes him referring to Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* as "probably the best world-fetish ever constructed by a man who wanted to be God."

This attempt to change human nature fails, of course. But it succeeds in inoculating itself against the discovery of that failure by accepting "the nonrecognition of reality as a matter of principle," as Voegelin writes in *The New Science of Politics.* Nonrecognition of reality begets "moral insanity," a comprehensive ignorance that imagines itself to be a full *gnosis,* or knowledge, of all of history's "laws." Human consciousness, Voegelin observes, is a given; however we may try to account for it, we unquestionably "have" it. Our consciousness experiences the *other,* things and relations that at least apparently exist "outside" of ourselves. This, again, is a given, however philosophers may try to explain it away. Although empiricists and some "idealists" try to explain consciousness by referring to "subjects" and "objects," Voegelin insists that the only genuinely empiri-

LIBERAL CULTURE

Sophisticated Laddies

We are monitoring developments on the couturier front, and so read with great interest a letter in the "Voice of the People" section of the *Chicago Tribune.* As far as letter-to-the-editor writing is concerned, it was an unheard-of experience, because it was signed not by a person but by an object: "Co-chair, Illinois Gay and Lesbian Task Force." In it we could read:

> Over 99 percent of the men in the parade were not dressed in female attire, and that sprinkling who did dress as women lent the parade a touch of glamor and humor which is not found among the clowns and leprechauns in the St. Patrick's Day parade.

ERA, where are you when we need you? Under your benign rule a lawsuit would be possible to require replacement of the seven dwarfs with an equal number of drag queens for the edification of preschoolers. □

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cal experience we have refers primarily to consciousness of the other as a genuine other, not as a mere "mental construct."

What may seem a purely theoretical concern actually has political implications for the contemporary world. Modern politics—Voegelin calls it "Gnostic" politics—depends on precisely the sort of epistemology that splits "subject" and "object" so that one can conquer the other. In the modern West, all "values" are believed to be "subjective," in spite of traditional claims for ethical principles rooted in human nature. In the modern East, Lenin teaches (in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism)* that the "objective" material world colonizes the "subjective" consciousness. Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot carried this "objectivist" conquest of the other to its insane extreme.

By insisting on consciousness of the other as a given, as irreducible to "subjectivity" or "objectivity," Voegelin would cure modernity's radical mental imbalance, restoring the balance between matter and form, process and structure. This balance restores the sense of divine hierarchy, one that is dynamic rather than static. A difficulty arises here because form, process, and structure, in Voegelin's arrangement, are not material, whereas matter obviously is. He suggests that matter "issues" from the divine, and admits the mystery of that. Mystery allows him to meld reason and faith, Athens and Jerusalem. According to Sandoz: "Faith in the reason of the Whole is . . . the foundation of all philosophizing."

In *Anamnesis* (which means "not-forgetting"), Voegelin remembers that his favorite childhood schoolbook was called *The Book of Realities:* "The realities of nature that were to be found in this book I do not remember; but history is still firmly retained." Voegelin's not-forgetting of history (which, as he conceives it, is not a succession of external events but "the unfolding of the typical in meaningful concreteness," an aspect of the *metaxy*) and his forgetting of material nature (relegated to the status of the mysterious basis, but not the form, process, or structure, of life) allow him to do to the "Gnostics" what the "Gnostics" try to do to him: silent questioning. Silence can be discreet or crude. "Gnostic" silence, which usually results in totalitarianism or libertinism, deserves classification as a crude silence. Voegelin's silence, conceived in resistance to "Gnosticism," deserves the esteem we feel for refinement. Whereas crudeness teaches us only about itself, refinement can teach us about itself and about matters beyond it. The education Voegelin offers excels modern education even when it ends in the silence of unresolved paradox.

Friedmann and Sandoz gladly learn from their teachers, and gladly they teach us their learning. If modern education invites the students' resentment of those who provoke fear, envy, or temptation, the teaching of Buber and Voegelin invites gratitude. □

On Korea, Right & Wrong

Joseph Goulden: *Korea: The Untold Story of the War;* Times Books; New York.

Robert Smith: *MacArthur in Korea: The Naked Emperor:* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

Joseph Goulden's new book is not the *whole* untold story of the Korean War, but his informative work exposes a good deal that was previously hidden, even if it does not fundamentally change our perspectives on the war. Despite some faults and questionable interpretations, this is an excellent book, clearly written and sometimes moving—if sometimes irritating. Goulden's narrative alternates between discussions of strategy and policy-making at the highest levels and on-the-spot descriptions of critical ground engagements. The portions dealing with actual fighting are well written, but they seem to be derived largely from the works of S. L. A. Marshall, T. R. Fehrenbach and Andrew Geer. The real value of *Korea* lies in its revelations of upper-echelon machinations and its treatment of the peace talks. These revelations are not always flattering to the Truman administration and even less so to General MacArthur.

Goulden is not, to put it mildly, an admirer of MacArthur—although he is surprisingly sympathetic to Syngman Rhee. The book sometimes seems to be more about MacArthur's foibles than about the Korean War. Some of the space devoted to MacArthur's quirks might have been better spent on descriptions of the air and naval war, both of which Goulden neglects. (The air campaign in Korea was far more important than is generally realized.) In short, Goulden is successful in cutting MacArthur down to size. Basing his arguments on the statements of Thomas Jefferson Davis, MacArthur's aide in the 1930's, Goulden suggests that "The implications of the Davis material . . . [were] that MacArthur was much too unstable a man to be entrusted with a delicate military-political command." Some of MacArthur's behavior was indeed bizarre (though it should be noted that Davis saw him at a low point in his life), but MacArthur's supposed threats of suicide—he reportedly forced Davis to talk him out of it—may explain why his fellow officers referred to MacArthur as "Sarah Bernhardt." Douglas MacArthur was not a shining example of mental health, but he did command successfully from 1941 to 1950. The Korean War was not one of the more glorious episodes in his career, although even Goulden praises his execution of the In-

Dr. Levine is a historian in New York City.

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chon landing.

In his attack on MacArthur's conduct after the Inchon landing, Goulden is shooting at a sitting duck. Few people, except for MacArthur and his staff officers, have tried to defend his blundering course in the autumn of 1950. And their dishonest and contradictory alibis did MacArthur a disservice, drawing attention away from MacArthur's legitimate grievances. Moreover, as Goulden himself admits, there was plenty of blame to go around. MacArthur was reckless, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not restrain him. Practically everyone chose to believe that the appearance of Chinese troops in October had been part of a bluff or a limited move to defend the Yalu River hydroelectric plants. The only ones who came off well during this period were the Navy and the Marine Corps. The naval command in the Far East, fearing that the Chinese would enter the war full-scale, undertook vital preparations; the Marines in northeast Korea were cautious and careful, and avoided disaster—unlike the Army troops on their flanks.

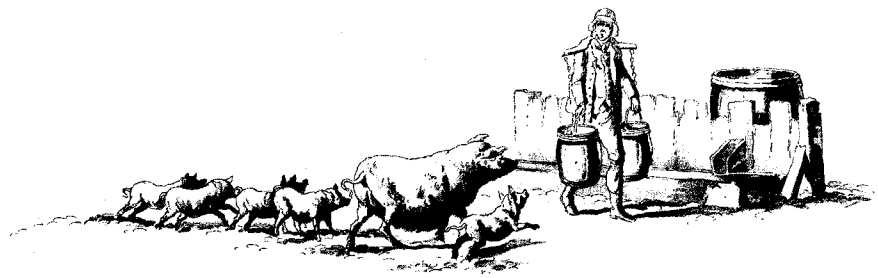
After the defeat in North Korea, MacArthur panicked, concluding that Korea would probably have to be evacuated. The Joint Chiefs were also in a state of shock. It was General Ridgway, the men in the field and—surprisingly—Secretary of State Dean Acheson who performed exceptionally well. Actually, the extent of that defeat has often been exaggerated. As Goulden notes, it soon became apparent that there was no real danger of the Chinese driving the Allies out of the South, and Truman quickly dropped any idea of a united Korea. MacArthur's program for bombing and blockading China was simply unnecessary for the defense of South Korea, so the argument between MacArthur and Washington was really about what their proper objective should be. Whatever one's views on that subject—and there is a good deal more to be said in favor of MacArthur's opinion than Goulden allows—it is clear that MacArthur's behavior was improper; his duty as a soldier was to obey or to resign, not to snipe publicly at the administration. Goulden discloses that MacArthur's insubordination was worse that has been known previously. Truman learned, through the breaking of diplomatic codes, that MacArthur had indicated to Spanish and Portuguese diplomats that he was conniving to get American policy reversed in order to decisively defeat China. Truman was unable to relieve MacArthur at that point only because the source of his information could not be disclosed; he had to wait until MacArthur committed a less spectacular but public transgression.

While MacArthur's behavior was indefensible, it does not negate *all* of his ideas. Very few senior military officers agreed with either the restrictions on American forces or the limited objectives after 1950. (Perhaps the most eloquent exponent of MacArthur's ideas was not MacArthur himself, but Admiral C. Turner Joy, after the latter served as chief negotiator with the communists at Panmunjom.) Even Truman was unhappy with the situation: as he explained to MacArthur in January 1951, "Steps which might in themselves be fully justified and which might lend some assistance to the campaign in Korea would not be beneficial if they thereby involved Japan or Western Europe in large-scale hostilities." Some of the arguments used against MacArthur are extremely dubious. It is very doubtful that the Chinese could have attacked our bases in Japan with any success, which negates the notion that the "privileged sanctuary" given China was therefore a mutual affair. Goulden does not refute MacArthur's claim that the limited force he needed to accomplish his program would not have crippled us in Western Europe in 1951.

Goulden, however, does not quite share the satisfaction of Truman, Acheson, et al. He notes: "Truman and Acheson went to great lengths to avoid a direct accusation that the Soviets were the true culprits in the war, a failure that in essence proved the Soviets' point—that is, that the USSR could use satellites to nip at America's flanks without fear of provoking direct retaliation. Such was the basic flaw of the Truman-Acheson policy in Korea." In other words: *Plus ça change, plus c'est même chose.*

* * *

Robert Smith, the author of *Baseball: A Narrative History,* has produced the literary equivalent of a spitball. While Joseph Goulden's book occasionally sounds like it should have been called *The Case Against MacArthur,* at least Goulden knows how to make a case—Smith does not. His ridiculous book is somewhat reminiscent of Joe McCarthy's famous philippic against General Marshall. Smith, a left-wing liberal, has a tendency toward ranting, selection of evidence and deviousness with a streak of simplemindedness much like that of the right-wing villain he reviles. True, Douglas MacArthur is a much better target than George Marshall because his real blunders, as well as the vanity and dishonesty he often exhibited, leave him far more vulnerable than the wholly honorable and self-effacing Marshall. But Smith is not content to point out MacArthur's real flaws and follies. For



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example, Smith has MacArthur "praying" for the Chinese to enter the war, though MacArthur's real fault was his wishful thinking that they would *not*. MacArthur did say that he hoped the Chinese would attack Formosa—which he correctly believed would lead to a crushing defeat for the communists.

Smith's picture of developments in Korea between 1945 and 1950 is decidedly misleading, and it exaggerates MacArthur's influence on policy. While the American occupation of South Korea was not one of the more impressive episodes of postwar American history, neither was it quite the horror Smith claims. The military government did lean rightward in Korean politics, but it was not as violently biased as he suggests. Nor was the ROK government a "dictatorship"; Rhee became a dictator *after* the Korean War, not before it. Smith's cockeyed view is exemplified by his comment on the origins of the war: "The Truman administration was just as bent as MacArthur on building an anti-Communist stronghold in Korea. Given the Soviet desire to establish a friendly nation on its borders and the United States' urge to plant an unfriendly one there, it may well have been too late to apply the brakes to the wheels of history." To Smith, the communization of North Korea is comparable to, if not more defensible than, the Americans' bumbling efforts to establish a democracy in the South. But the record shows that the United States did not build a "stronghold"; it removed its troops as soon as possible, leaving South Korea without proper defenses.

In attempting to demolish what is generally regarded as MacArthur's greatest achievement—the occupation of Japan—Smith outdoes himself. His arguments appear to be derived from a single book published in the late 1940's, and they range from wildly exaggerated to simply fantastic. We are told, for example, that Japanese literacy was "partly imaginary," while Japan has long been one of the world's most literate countries. Perhaps Smith confused Chinese writing, which is ideographic, with Japanese, which is not. He twists the record and depicts MacArthur's reforms as reactionary or flawed. Smith has a gift for the literary equivalent of shooting himself in the foot; at one point, while stressing MacArthur's opposition to socialism (which no one has ever doubted), he assures the reader that MacArthur could not have permitted "industrial plants, or transportation or communications" to have been nationalized. Japan's railroads and communications were nationalized—*they always have been.*

This absurd book finishes with the accusation that MacArthur was anti-Semitic and racist. The sole basis for this charge seems to be that some of MacArthur's subordinates had such prejudices—and Smith's evidence even on this isn't particularly clear or reliable. Joe McCarthy might well have been pleased with this ringing reaffirmation of "guilt by association." □

An American Hero Revisited

Charles Bracelen Flood: *Lee: The Last Years;* Houghton Mifflin Co.; Boston.

by Otto J. Scott

Hagiography—the literature of the lives of the saints—marks one of the greatest errors of the Roman Catholic Church, which is in so many respects so awesome an achievement. The basic nature of that error is in exaggeration, although that quality does not cover its entire scope. One of its subsidiary features is an underestimation of the shrewdness of humanity, coupled with a respect for the need of every human being to admire virtue and the virtuous. The Church, therefore, fell into the error of gilding the lives of the saints. The exercise itself appears redundantly foolish. No series of lives contains as much fascinating material as the struggle of saints to be worthy of their own ideals, to persist in faith when the average man would have long been lost. Instead of creating a literature that could serve as both an example and a goal for all people, the Church made the mistake of producing saccharine tracts, incredible legends, sugary myths, impossible stories. One result was that the incredulity of Europe broke forth in the Renaissance, and sanctity gave way to fame: the nearest to immortality that pagan minds can accept.

Mr. Scott is a frequent contributor to these pages.

For several generations writers were content to elevate illustrious figures to the high levels once reserved for saints. But once again literature became infested with writers who consistently assumed that all the rest of the world, unlike themselves, was unable to separate the trivial from the noble in the personalities of others. Such writers devoted themselves to ensuring that their readers would accept the famous not only as superior but also as perfect. In time this style of writing about the illustrious collapsed, as had the earlier hagiography. Lytton Strachey was not the first, but he was certainly one of the most asperic debunkers: *his* error was to assume that since virtue had been grossly exaggerated in the literature of the Victorians, it did not exist at all. Thus the pendulum swung to the opposite extreme.

There is a small army of writers in the United States today whose major preoccupation appears to be robbing the illustrious dead of the honors they achieved in life. The moral caliber of these hacks is equal to that of the grave robbers of the Valley of the Kings in Egypt. They steal in upon a cadaver and strip it of its gold ornaments and jewels, which they then hawk in the marketplace. Figures both high and low, and their families, have suffered such

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depredations in recent years. In this genre the omissions are as interesting as the subjects: some notable monsters have remained undisturbed because their followers are still powerful.

I do not subscribe to this approach to biography, nor do I support panegyrics like the one written about Robert E. Lee by Charles Flood. Lee was a great soldier and a good man in nearly every sense of the word. He was not a saint because he was not a spiritual leader. He was, however, a brilliant general and a Virginian patriot.

In *Lee: The Last Years,* Mr. Flood introduces Lee at Appomattox, where he patiently waited for General Grant. Grant was generous, the author notes, and Lee made an honorable surrender of the Army of Virginia. Most Americans believe that this was the end of the Civil War. It was not: fighting continued in other parts of the South, since Jefferson Davis did not surrender at the time of Appomattox, and General Lee was not commander-in-chief of the Southern armies. That was a post reserved for the President of the Confederate States. Appomattox was, however, the beginning of the end.

A few months after Appomattox, General Lee accepted the presidency of Washington College in Lexington, Virginia. Mr. Flood is both accurate and skillful in portraying the dire straits of that college. The head of its board of trustees had to borrow a suit and fifty dollars in order to undertake to visit the General, to ask him to join the school. Mr. Flood pictures these and the other developments of Lee's postwar years, and there were only five, very smoothly. Lee's tenderness toward little children, his concern for his crippled wife Mary, the warm relations between Lee and his sons, the great affection with which the General was regarded by the South, his students, his neighbors and history—these and other details are rendered in neat anecdotes. So smoothly does this sweet story unravel that one can visualize it suitably truncated in the pages of *Reader's Digest.* All the elements of the Lee legend are set in place and seemingly reinforced. The theory that General Lee helped to heal the nation after the Civil War is, somehow, retained while at the same time the author briefly describes how the Radical Republicans under Thaddeus Stevens nearly impeached President Johnson, and how they did succeed in forcing occupation and "Reconstruction" upon the defeated South. Mr. Flood even properly notes the fact that at the end of the Civil War, six Northern States still refused suffrage for blacks, while virtually the entire North was mobilized to ensure the rights of blacks to vote in the South, to restrict the franchise for whites and to forbid former Confederates from holding public office—and proclaimed a new era of brotherhood and equality. These observations appear but briefly. The author trains his eyes upon General Lee as a college president, as a dutiful replier to mountains of letters, as a man who would hear no criticism of U.S. Grant, as one who did his best to resume life as a loyal American in the restored Union.

Such presentation isn't wrong in the sense of vulgar error: the specifics are true enough. The problem with Mr. Flood's version of General Lee's life is that it does not go far enough, and in this deliberate restriction, he portrays the Lee of legend—which does not enhance our knowledge but tends instead to wither our interest. This pale, suffering-in-silence Lee, who bent his formidable powers to the problems presented by the slowest students, who behaved with humility before arrogant Northern congressmen, who had little to say when invited to the White House by President Grant and whose greatest pleasures were riding a horse and chatting aimlessly with small farmers, is a far cry from the general revealed by war. Mr. Flood's Lee is a man humbled by defeat, weakened physically and mentally, who refused to respond to efforts of old colleagues to rally the South—and whose mildness provides a mawkish martyrology for devotees of secular saints. All these features of Lee are familiar to generations of Southerners—though not particularly to Northerners. I do not recall a word about Lee's postwar life or the Reconstruction being spoken in the schools of the Hudson River Valley. But Southerners must feel a certain uneasiness when they read about Lee's abnegation after the war, his meek silence under provocation and his refusal to even inquire about the pardon he—like other Confederates—had been promised.

After the war the whites of the North put the whites of the South legally below their former slaves. This curiously mixed racial situation is seldom mentioned, and it is one that must have been agonizing for Southern whites. Mr. Flood refers to it only indirectly, and when he does his tone is distinctly Northern—that is, *modern.* Mr. Flood makes it clear that he deplores the Klan and postwar racial violence, and he manages to make General Lee seem to share such sentiments, which fit neatly into the contemporary context and skirt vast areas of historical reality. This is not to say that Lee was ardently in favor of slavery or human subjugation. The general respected his father-in-law's will and freed nearly two hundred slaves before the war, and he treated both blacks and whites with great civility.

Mr. Flood's portrait of the general fits the needs of our civil "religion" more than it does the larger, more complex and difficult figure of the man. That subject was dealt with in a remarkable and enlightening work by Dr. Thomas L. Connelly published in 1977, *The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society.* Dr. Connelly saw many reasons for the growth of the Lee legend, including the need of the South to be restored in its own eyes, despite its defeat. Dr. Connelly, aware (as Mr. Flood does not seem to be) that the South was a stronghold of Calvinism, is also aware that the outcome of the war, according to this doctrine, reflected the will of God. Southerners, including Lee, therefore felt compelled to redeem

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themselves but were handicapped by the malignant campaign of the Radical Republicans to paint all white Southerners as monsters of evil. Under these circumstances, the noble bearing and virtuous life of Robert E. Lee became critically important as a Southern figure. Lee's modest postwar position in education—itself a cornerstone of civic virtue—fit the need of the South with remarkable aptness. The campaigns of Virginia, which put him close to Washington and made him accessible to the journalists of the North, had made Lee's name far better known in the North than that of other Southern commanders in other areas.

To this day the average American thinks of the Civil War in terms of Gettysburg and Appomattox, and hardly gives a thought to the occupation of New Orleans, the destruction of Atlanta or the activities of the other generals of the Confederacy in other theaters of the war. Popular critiques of Lee's generalship are virtually nonexistent. Dr. Connelly is one of the few to point out that Lee was often rash and that he lost a great many men in a number of remarkably reckless offensives. That his marriage was difficult is hardly a secret, though Lee was loyal to his vows and uncomplaining. His wife was persistently unpleasant, and his sons lacked their father's abilities. Lee's attitude toward his daughters was smothering, and they died spinsters. Lee was in financial trouble nearly all his life, and never really overcame these problems. He never owned a home of his own, and it was his sorrow that he lost the estates his wife inherited when he chose to defend Virginia. His was a troubled life, though it had its rewards. In essence, Robert E. Lee was a Virginian. He defended his state, his family and his estate. He did not speak ardently in this defense until after the war had brought his blood up—but it was very hot blood.

One of the most important aspects of Lee's life has never been emphasized: Lee was not confirmed in the Episcopal Church until he was forty-six years old. To me, this indicates a genuine conversion. Somewhere along the line of his hard, frustrated life in the army, Lee discovered his faith. The significance of this is not often realized by unreligious modern scholars: it seems reasonable to me to assume that from this point on Lee turned the results of all events over to God. That alone enabled him to survive the terrible experience of Appomattox and its aftermath. To say that such a man, with all his troubles, passions, problems and difficult mastery of self was a saint is to drop the entire subject of Robert E. Lee to a lower level of understanding. To imply that he was virtuous by nature and not by discipline is to underrate the size, scope and significance of Lee's victory over the circumstances of his life.

Mr. Flood appears to have aimed at creating a national hero out of Lee, which is an unnecessary undertaking. He was certainly an illustrious general, but the fact remains that he was defeated in the field by Ulysses S. Grant. There is no reason why Grant should be regarded with a patronizing contempt and the general he defeated elevated to national stature. Lee is a Virginian hero and a legend in the Lost Cause. Let him so remain. □

The Obsolete Anguish & New Southern Dances

Willie Morris: *Terrains of the Heart and Other Essays on Home;* Yoknapatawpha Press; Oxford, Mississippi.

Reynolds Price: *The Source of Light;* Atheneum; New York.

Lee Smith: *Cakewalk;* G.P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

Beverly Lowry: *Daddy's Girl;* Viking; New York.

by James J. Thompson, Jr.

In April of 1922 the first issue of *The Fugitive,* a magazine of poetry, appeared in Nashville, Tennessee. This undertaking had been conceived by two Vanderbilt University English professors, John Crowe Ransom and Donald Davidson; an arrogantly precocious student named Allen Tate; and the other members of a group of professors, students and townsmen who met weekly to read and discuss their poetry. Vanderbilt and Nashville took little note of the new magazine: how were they to know they were witnessing the birth of modern Southern literature?

Dr. Thompson is former associate editor of Chronicles of Culture.

The efflorescence that began in Nashville in April of 1922 would make the American South a byword in the annals of 20th-century literature. The names associated with this flowering form a litany that future generations of aspiring writers would recite as they dozed off over their own unfinished manuscripts: Ransom, Davidson, Tate, Warren, Wolfe, Caldwell, Lytle, Porter, Gordon, Welty, Williams, McCullers, O'Connor. In a class by himself stands Faulkner, one of the few American novelists worthy to enter the ring with the geniuses of the European novel. The most backward region of America, an area known primarily for its dashing soldiers, garrulous politicians, rumbustious preachers and alluring women, became for a time the literary capital of the United States. The results of what has been called the "Southern renaissance" are clear, but the causes have kept scholars busy with research and speculation. Why this time and place? Can one answer this anymore than one can explain why Elizabethan England produced Shakespeare, Marlowe and Jonson? In the South's case, perhaps it had

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something to do with the peculiar visions induced by imbibing large quantities of bourbon whiskey, or maybe it sprang from a steady diet of grits, greens, redeye gravy, country ham and cornbread. These suggestions certainly make as much sense as the tortuous theories offered by some scholars.

Sheer genius defies explanation, but one can at least venture a few observations on the web of circumstances that inspired Faulkner and his fellow luminaries. The first generation of writers who put the South on the map came of age in the years just before and after World War I. They carried the legacy of a proud and vigorous people who had built a society on slavery, only to see the edifice destroyed by the ravages of four years of warfare. More than most Americans, these young Southerners knew—as scholars like Vann Woodward and Louis Rubin have pointed out—the burden of a history filled with violence, evil and guilt. They saw all around them the results of this history: poverty, racism, ignorance. Tradition and the pride of a defeated people prodded them to keep the faith, to revere the Lost Cause, and to wrap themselves in the old insularity that Southerners had used as a weapon against alien Yankee ways. But these young men and women—bright, bookish and eager to step beyond the confines delimited by past generations—belonged to the 20th century, which had already begun to force its presence on the land below the Potomac. It was no accident that Allen Tate, scion of the old gentry of the Maryland and Virginia tidewater, should stride across the Vanderbilt campus armed with a copy of Eliot's *The Wasteland*. They were Southerners but also moderns, attuned to the flux and change of the cultural and intellectual scene of the early 20th century. As Quentin Compson discovered in his dormitory room at Harvard, he and others both loved and hated the land that had nurtured them.

Out of this clash between the old and the new, between tradition and modernity, came the self-consciousness and acute sensitivity that shaped the special vision upon which each writer played his own variations. This unique situation lasted long enough to inspire a second wave of writers—those who came of age during the depression and war years—but the South after World War II was a far different place than the land of Faulkner's young manhood. Any consideration of the vitality of contemporary Southern literature must take this into account. One might argue that *Southern* literature no longer exists, that what we have today are novelists who happen to have grown up in the South, a region in many ways no longer profoundly different from the rest of America. It is hard to imagine a young writer in 1982—even one from Mississippi—pouring his passions into a love/hate affair with the South.

The unique circumstances have passed but the writing has not abated. On a quiet night one can hear the scratching of pens and the clack of typewriters rising to a crescendo; from Virginia to Texas an orgy of composition has seized the South. Willie Morris, Reynolds Price, Lee Smith and Beverly Lowry form only a small squad of that vast army of writers, near-writers and would-be writers encamped between the Potomac and the Rio Grande.

Willie Morris furnishes a prime example of a Southerner who has never recovered from an overdose of Faulkner. His most recent book, *Terrains of the Heart and Other Essays on Home*, indicates the deleterious effects of clinging to a Faulknerian vision after the South that shaped that vision has passed. Granted, Morris was born in Yazoo City, Mississippi in 1933 and grew up in a society that still labored under the burdens that provoked Faulkner to an anguished ambivalence toward his native state. But Morris, unlike Faulkner, abandoned Mississippi, first to thrive in the Texas-style liberalism of Austin, then to walk the swards of Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar and finally, as he entitled his autobiography of 1967, to flee *North Toward Home* to New York City. Morris became a self-proclaimed "exile" rather than to cast his lot with Mississippi. He had it both ways: he edited *Harper's* and ran with the Yankees, all the while moaning about the guilt and agony of having sprung from a blood-drenched land. In the late 1960's Morris became every New Yorker's favorite Southern liberal.

The wayward son has recently gone home to become writer-in-residence at

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the University of Mississippi in Faulkner's own town of Oxford. Morris has returned to a transformed Mississippi, one that has more black elected officials than any other state in the Union. He applauds this progress, but he continues his obsession with the old Mississippi. How fortunate Morris must consider Faulkner to have been: all that guilt and violence and racism over which to anguish. Poor Morris: he must stroll across an integrated campus and watch an all-black basketball team in action. Times have changed, but race remains the only subject worth discussing; as he wrote while living in Washington, D.C., in 1976:

> From my reading of our history, I have always believed the central thread that runs through us as a people is the relationship between the white man and the black man in America. Perhaps it takes a Southerner to know in his heart the extent to which we in the cities, and especially in this one, are paying the terrible price of slavery.

Washingtonians of whatever color can take consolation from those words the next time they are mugged by a black; in the meantime, Willie Morris will chant Faulknerian dirges to the sin-cursed homeland he carries in his head.

Reynolds Price is Morris's coeval and, although he grew up in eastern North Carolina, his South bears a striking resemblance to Morris's. His novels, beginning with *A Long and Happy Life* in 1962, work the familiar soil of an older Southern literature: convoluted family relationships, the rituals of small-town life, the ties to the land, the interplay between the races. But Price is no Faulknerian epigone: he refuses to allow the sins and follies of his ancestors to oppress him. He does not dwell on the burdens of history, nor does he believe that the manifold repercussions of racism form the sole preoccupation of white Southerners. Especially in *Surface of Earth* (1975) Price displays a talent for revealing the fullness and social density of people's lives without using race and guilt as spikes on which to impale his characters. In his ability to evince the quotidian richness of life Price belongs to the tradition of the 19th-century European novel. He knows how to weave the intersecting lives of his characters across time and place to create a compelling story. *Surface of Earth* is no *Anna Karenina,* but it comes closer to that masterpiece than does the thin gruel served up by most of Price's contemporaries.

In *The Source of Light* Price returns to the Mayfields of *Surface of Earth.* The first novel spanned nearly a half-century of family history; this one carves out one year in the life of Hutchins Mayfield who, when the story opens in May of 1955, is twenty-five years old. Like most males of his age—even in the North Carolina of the mid-50's—Hutch does not mope about, agonizing over racial oppression or the bloodstained and violent history of the South; love and sex, his desire to write, the scary possibilities of the future, his relationship to his family occupy his thoughts. This is no latter-day Quentin Compson as Morris might portray him; Hutch's pain and confusion arise from something far more universal than the vicissitudes of Southern history:

> I never felt cursed or burdened by, you know, all the layers of Mayfields and Kendals and Hutchins piled on me. What I have felt is full, *crowded* even. I'm the place where a good deal of time comes to bear, and several lives—the only place on earth . . . My people abandoned so much on my doorstep—or had it snatched from them, and set down here. There's no one left to use it at all, consume it, convert it, redeem back all my people pawned away—their generous starved hearts.

Reynolds Price, like Willie Morris, grew up in the last years of the South that drove Faulkner to pour his love and rage into the saga of Yoknapatawpha County. Price sensed, though, that a novelist in the post-World War II South needed to do more than to rework the old themes in the old ways. The South remained the province of his fiction—for the South is what he knows most thoroughly—but he left the Faulknerian anguish to the man who did it best—Faulkner himself. With the exception of Walker Percy, another novelist who struck off in his own direction, Reynolds Price is the most effective novelist writing in the South today.

Price's fellow North Carolinian, Lee Smith, has her own problems, but, in this case, they do not involve Faulkner. The South boasts five of the leading women writers of 20th-century America in Katherine Anne Porter, Caroline Gordon, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor and Eudora Welty. Smith seems to have taken her inspiration from the last three, especially from Miss Welty. *Cakewalk* collects Smith's stories of the 1970's, stories that explore the mundane realities of urban, small-town and

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rural life in the contemporary Carolinas (with side excursions to other parts of the South). Smith focuses her sharp eye on the manners, mores and morals of people one has known all one's life. No towering tragic figures like Thomas Sutpen for Smith, but rather housewives, adolescents, salesclerks and an occasional dotty—but lovable—character. A sensitivity to the dramas of seemingly banal lives infuses these stories; Smith understands what James Jones once advised a creative-writing class: "Show me the sympathetic insurance man." One does not need to stoop to television soap operas to know that housewives and salesclerks hurt, and that they wrestle with the vicissitudes of life in an effort to bring order, beauty and meaning to their lives. Lee Smith examines this world skillfully, but if one wants to see a supreme artist at work on this material one goes to Eudora Welty. Why drink domestic brandy when one can have Courvoisier at the same price?

In an essay in the October 1981 *Texas Observer* Larry McMurtry provoked the ire of Texas chauvinists by arguing that the state's writers had yet to produce a novel of commanding stature. The problem, wrote McMurtry, lay in the refusal of Texans to realize that their homeland has more to offer than longhorn steers, Gary Cooperish Texas Rangers and laconic cowboys. Where is the novelist who can capture the blend of raw energy and urban sophistication found in the cities that now dominate the state? Perhaps McMurtry's animadversions stemmed from personal frustration: he has himself tried unsuccessfully to write the novel of the new Texas cities. For whatever reason, McMurtry struck a truth: Texans —those peculiar creatures, half-Southern and half-Western—have imprisoned themselves in the tried-and-true themes of the past as surely as has a wholly Southern writer like Willie Morris. Cowboys can tyrannize the imagination as much as decadent aristocrats or downtrodden black sharecroppers. Texas novelists must come to terms with Houston just as Flannery O'Connor's heirs need to penetrate the glass towers of Atlanta.

McMurtry excluded from his ruminations those novelists who have immigrated to Texas; Beverly Lowry, author of *Daddy's Girl,* a novel set in contemporary Houston, thus will not fit McMurtry's bill: she was born in Memphis and raised in Mississippi. Still, Lowry enables one to see what Southern writers can do with the urban experience, a mode of life remote and alien to those who propelled Southern fiction to the forefront of American letters. Writers of the older South shied away from the cities that had already begun to burgeon in the 1920's. They stuck to rural and small-town folk, people whose lives had a rhythm and a timelessness upon which the novelist could play out his tale, secure in the knowledge that he trod firm and familiar ground. The rural and small-town world of eccentric maiden aunts, black domestics, sharp-tongued gossips, overalled rednecks and yearning adolescents supplied the novelist with ready material. The quirks, foibles and thinly veiled—but rigorously enforced—hypocrisies of these people presented a rich and seemingly inexhaustible vein of ore. When the city appeared at all, it generally hovered on the fringes without intruding directly into the world of Southern fiction. The city has now intruded, both in practice and, as Miss Lowry illustrates, in the imagination as well.

If *Daddy's Girl* is a fair sample of what this turn of events signifies, the sight is not a pretty one. Coherence and order have given way to disorder and dissolution: random individuals bounce about in the urban arena, cut loose from the supports once supplied by the land, kin, religion and a common past. The women of Lowry's world have been liberated—No More Pedestals!—but the best they can do with their new-found freedom is to waste it on empty fornication. Perhaps Lowry's protagonist says it best about the new Southern woman, who becomes a frequently prone participant in the sexual revolution: "Other people hide a sordid past. I put the lid on propriety." Her last words are: "Turn up the music. I plan to dance." So the new Southerner dances. But who will pay the fiddler? □

Dependent Literacy

***Writers at Work;* Edited by George Plimpton; Penguin Books; New York.**

Geoffrey Bocca: *Best Seller;* Wyndham Books; New York.

by Gordon M. Pradl

Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, our educational institutions are as much involved in socializing youth as they are in passing on information, skills and knowledge. This fact in itself should not alarm us; rather, our concern ought to be directed at the frightening discrepancy between the processes of schooling and its hoped-for outcomes. Consider, for instance, our schools' organizational patterns of mindless obedience and dependency, and how this conflicts with our recognition that the genius of America as a cultural/political entity is based on the qualities of initiative and self-assertiveness—in short, independence in the face of all those agents that would have us get back in step, conform to the dominant drummer. The tension between the individual and the bonding power of the group will, of course, never go away; we have succeeded as a civilization precisely because of our special creative harnessing of this tension, because of our mediation of these opposing forces. Today the manipulating power of other-directed controls appears to be swamp-

Dr. Pradl is professor of English education at New York University.

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ing the equation, and nowhere do we find starker evidence of this crisis than in the present sorry state of literacy in our nation—a state, ironically, which gives striking vitality to every cultural opposition.

In part, literacy is feeling hard times because it has been successfully usurped by the utilitarian crowd—those who see filling out a job application or reading a driving manual as the upper boundaries of "functional literacy." But this is the literacy of control, of fitting in with written directives from above. True literacy has something to do with the mysteries of meaning-making, with the paradoxical relationship between writers who write to capture and interpret lived and imagined experience and the reading public that enters into critical dialogue with these images and judgments. Thus evoked, literacy is fundamental to the health of a culture, because it is in this transaction between writers and readers that the values of a people are asserted, assessed and affirmed. Our moral energy is no finer than the stories by which we stand. In telling our own tales and in evaluating those of others we blend our separateness with the rhythms of humanity; we define our uniqueness in the face of the shared necessities of group constraints.

Our roots of self-determination spring emphatically from the Protestant liberation of the Sacred Texts. Once the central authority of the Vulgate was broken by its translation into the spoken languages of the people (and widely disseminated via the printing press), interpretation no longer was an exclusionary act. Such dispersal of authority has always been a threat to existing arrangements, but it is exactly what a healthy society needs—in the right proportion. The individual's unique interpretation of texts continues to be our primary defense against tyranny. So it is not surprising that vested interests are constantly striving to create a conformity of response.

A poem, a play, a novel—each plots out and organizes a moral stance toward an experience. Through our transactions with texts we generate and come to know systems of value; indeed, our very responding represents an act of positive obstinacy. The direction in which our sympathies flow, the choices that we make from among competing alternatives, characterize tentative progress toward civilized coherence. As we struggle with the options in life, with the divided loyalties between self and others, as we seek to mediate the tension between individual fulfillment and institutional constraint, as we rest balanced between convention and innovation, our inherent need to see representations of actual and potential events of our lives propels us forward in search of a meaning which corresponds to our sense of justice and discretion, of liberty and sanity. The resulting explanatory fictions define our identities. They are finally our integrity. They make independence possible.

Believing in these truths, we naturally advocate approaches to the teaching of literacy which develop the powers of a student/citizen to appropriate the literary work for himself, to be secure in the distinction between pronouncement and judgment. The current scene, however, provides overwhelming evidence that we have failed to create independent readers. Consequently, we are hard-pressed to expose much of what passes for wisdom in today's publishing circles. Since our countervailing intelligence is undermined, some relish the orgiastic, collectivist howl that is called contemporary literature. Such readers have been so conditioned to look to the pronouncements of others for the latest trends that they are unable to recognize exploitation, even when they are deluged by the latest hypocritical assault on their unsuspecting sensibilities. Yet the problem goes deeper than the erosion of critical faculties. The reader has lost dominion over his response; the marketplace has become oppressive.

But why have powers of discernment atrophied so severely? An attentive reading of *Writers at Work* and *Best Seller* begins to suggest reasons for the current dependent state of literacy in America.

Writers at Work is the fifth in the series of *Paris Review* interviews with contemporary writers begun in 1953. As with earlier volumes, a reader can gain significant insights into the craft of writ-

In the Mail

Anyone for Insomnia? **by Richard Armour; Woodbridge Press; Santa Barbara, CA.** An amusing little book about sleep: particularly the lack of it and how to get it.

Privatizing the Public Sector: How to Shrink Government **by E.S. Savas; Chatham House; Chatham, NJ.** Commissioned by the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, this book shows how governments become bloated and how to reduce them via the private sector.

Hoover Essays; **The Hoover Institution; Stanford, CA.** Press clippings of stories by Hoover fellows, staff, and authors that appeared in magazines and newspapers.

"Codetermination in the West: The Case of Germany," The Heritage Lectures No. 10 by Steve Pejovich; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C. Codetermination—labor participation in management—is shown to be a potent enemy of capitalism.

"Cutting the Government: How is Reagan Doing?" The Heritage Lectures No. 11 by Donald Lambro; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C. This address explains how government spending—the Reagan Administration's efforts notwithstanding—is still freely flowing.

"The Political Future of American Trade Unions," The Heritage Lectures No. 12 by John Burton; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C. Possible paths for American unions are examined, based on those of their British brethren.

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ing—how writers work, how they define the purposes of their genre, what sources of inspiration have been of particular importance—as well as a tidal wave of literary gossip. The interview format, although conducive to spontaneity and informality (an unveiling of the personality behind the myths), risks elevating the witty and charming remark above the more prosaic extended argument. And, finally, the quality of the insight depends on the stature of the individual author, which, of course, may nullify the whole enterprise. Here, for instance, among the fifteen writers interviewed, only Archibald MacLeish, Pablo Neruda and Isaac Bashevis Singer are noteworthy. And they must keep company with the likes of Kingsley Amis and Irwin Shaw. Female representation is limited to Joan Didion and Joyce Carol Oates.

MacLeish sets the standard against which our society's fall from grace (in terms of literacy) must be judged:

> I began to understand then, by teaching a course in which I tried to find out for myself what poetry is, what it *really* is. I began to understand that it is a part of a process which extends beyond poetry but which is most apparent *in* poetry, of trying to *see* human experience, trying to *see* 'the world.' 'The world' being what a man feels *about* the world. Now if you realize this—what the purpose of your art is—you come to see that you are laboring at your art not only to make works of art but to make sense of your life—those dark and bewildering moments of experience. And to make sense of it not only for yourself . . . [Poems] are steps in an attempt to stop time in terms of time so that it may be *seen*. To stop time, but to stop it on its own terms. Let man see it. Make it *visible* to men. Therefore, whatever you leave behind you exists in terms of those others who have read it, who are aware of it, who were moved by it.

A writer's attempts at this clarity of vision are frustrated in countless ways. The cult of personality, for one, overwhelms the intentions of the artistic dialogue between writer and reader, as MacLeish suggests:

> The tragedy—and it is a tragedy—of Hemingway's fame is that his life and his dramatization of himself have been built up, not by him, or let me say, not altogether by him, to such a point that the myth of the man is more important than the achievement—the work.

Much evidence of this depressing self-puffery exists on the very pages of *Writers at Work*. One recoils, for example, at the posturing of James Dickey with his tastelessly meanspirited tough-guy manner.

> I don't care much for Robert Frost, and have never been able to understand his reputation. He says a good thing now and then, but with a strange way of averting his eyes while saying it which may be profound and may be poppycock. If it were thought that anything I wrote was influenced by Robert Frost, I would take that particular work of mine, shred it, and flush it down the toilet, hoping not to clog the pipes.

Hyped on the image rather than the substance, the public lies in a fragmented trance which art is all too ready to reinforce rather than to counter. As John Cheever describes it:

> There has been a genuine loss of serenity, not only in the reading public, but in all our lives. Patience, perhaps, or even the ability to concentrate. At one point when television first came in no one was publishing an article that couldn't be read during a commercial.

When there is not time to do one's own thinking, what is needed is the instant authority of pronouncement—the predigested format of textual response as information-processing and speed-reading, not as the reflective recursions of reading in slow motion.

The critic-turned-reviewer hardly helps the situation when he speeds along the surface of texts, sustaining easy prejudices instead of challenging them. As can be expected, the interviewed writers are uneasy with the "accomplishments" of critics.

> You have to understand that a critic, in order to be a critic, always has to have his own pet theory about a writer. He has to put you in some definite category, stuff you in a pigeonhole, and it doesn't make much difference to him if a great deal of your work, or even most of it, belongs in another category entirely. When this happens, when what you've written doesn't fall into the critic's chosen terrain, he ignores it.

Such a prejudging approach on the part of the critic explains Joyce Carol Oates's frustration: "Critics sometimes appear to be addressing themselves to works other than those I remember writing." Indeed, criticism appears to be more a game of one-upmanship in which the club atmosphere reigns supreme over a serious encounter with texts. Irwin Shaw speaks of the deadening effect of his season spent reviewing drama for *The New Republic:*

> It wore out the pleasure of going to the theater. There's an almost unavoidable feeling of smugness, of self-satisfaction, of teacher's pettiness, that sinks into a critic's bones, and I was afraid of it. You see it in all our newspapers and reviews. They've even gone so far as to dub this the Age of Criticism, and every time one of them comes out with a book proving that Melville had a wart on his right nostril instead of on his left, as had been generally supposed up to then, all the other critics start shivering in ecstasy and murmuring 'Saint-Beuve come again.' They're so damned polite to each other they swallow the worst kind of piddling nonsense from each other as though it was sugar candy.

Overkill (envy?), perhaps, but unfortunately the critic is encouraged to set

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himself apart, and so, in turn, he becomes purveyor of bad taste. We should not, then, be surprised that the teaching of literature in our schools, for the most part, ends up being an integral part of this system of dependency. Ironically, it is Gore Vidal who most aptly characterizes the dynamics of this bondage.

> After taking a course in The Novel, it is an unusual student who would ever want to read a novel again. Those English courses are what have killed literature for the public. Books are made a duty. Imagine teaching novels! Novels used to be written simply to read. It was assumed until recently that there was a direct connection between writer and reader. Now that essential connection is being mediated—bugged?—by English departments. Well, who needs the mediation? Who needs to be taught how to read a contemporary novel? Either you read it because you want to or you don't. Assuming, of course, that you can read anything at all. But this business of taking novels apart in order to show bored children how they were put together—there's a madness in it. Only a literary critic would benefit, and there are never more than ten good critics in the United States at any given moment. So what is the point to these desultory autopsies performed according to that little set of instructions at the end of each text? Have you seen one? What symbols to look for? What does the author mean by the word 'white'? I look at the notes appended to my own pieces in anthologies and know despair.

Such socialization ends by discouraging the writing of serious texts. Says Vidal:

> Eventually the novel will simply be an academic exercise, written by academics to be used in classrooms in order to test the ingenuity of students. A combination of Rorschach test and anagram. Hence, the popularity of John Barth, a perfect U-novelist whose books are written to be taught, not to be read.

Under such conditions art gradually loses its intimate influence on the quality of social living, and our immunity to all forms of outrage erodes accordingly.

In all too many classrooms texts are read as part of the cycle which concludes in the testing for knowledge and facts—which are generally someone else's answers. Seldom do texts play their proper role of allowing the student to imaginatively reconstruct and contemplate the possible range of human actions and emotions. The genuine responses of student/readers are treated as subordinate to the omniscient interpretations of the teacher/scholar/critic. Thus, these responses, whether accurate or not, go underground, only to re-emerge in the company of the best seller, a watered-down version of the literary nourishment so necessary in the shaping of our attitudes to the problems of living.

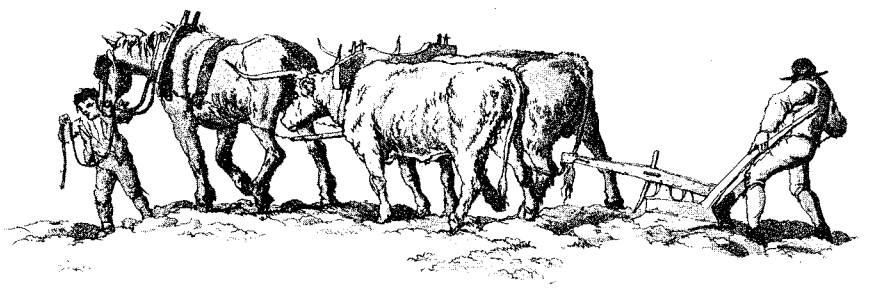
Geoffrey Bocca's sophmoric ("a nostalgic celebration of the less-than-great books you have always been afraid to admit you loved") literary excursion, *Best Seller,* is filled primarily with personal summaries of fifteen novels, including *King Solomon's Mines, Forever Amber, Tarzan of the Apes, The Virginian* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. This book also compares film versions with texts and chats about cutesy anecdotes. Yet occasionally we catch a glimpse into why a reader's response goes underground.

Although "an unrepentant dude," Bocca, while reading *The Virginian,* found himself "in a tactile wonderland in Medicine Bow, absorbing every sight, sound and smell: the canned corned beef the cowboys ate in the flyblown dining room, washed down with black coffee . . ." These vicarious lives, especially vital at the age of emerging sexual awareness, both gratify and extend perceptions. Such novels, though they make no claim to high art, evoke realms of experience that serve to mediate the reader's growing consciousness of competing complex possibilities. As a result of *Three Weeks* Bocca suggests, "Quite suddenly a way of life of the privileged, wealthy and highborn was laid bare to England's free lending libraries, and anyone who had a three penny piece to blow on a book."

Yet when we deny such works serious scrutiny we lose sight of their psychological and emotional power. The reader is left at their mercy, unable to command his judgments. This in turn debases the best seller itself into mere escape. As Bocca describes the cinematic degeneration of the potential that was *Tarzan:* "One of the most original, daring and sexually innovative creations of modern literature had become junk-food viewing for obese housewives." Independent literacy has no place in a somnambulent society.

However improbable it sounds, the solution to the dependent literacy problem, were we to act upon it, is simple and direct: talk. Talk which both performs the work and re-establishes the integrity of the individual's response to a given text. William Gass, one of the *Writers at Work,* emphasizes the notion of "the reader as an oral interpreter," for the wisdom of literature is finally for the ear, not the eye. In commenting on film, Gass continues:

> One of the fundamental problems



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with film is not simply its easy effects, and its conceptual poverty. That may in time be overcome. Film may be able to carry universals in a useful way. But you can't show films to yourself. There is no way of communicating inside your head but speech. And if you can't talk well to yourself, who can you talk to? You simply aren't anybody. I frequently imagine people who get bored with their own talk, who don't talk to themselves very much. Talk is essential to the human spirit. It *is* the human spirit. Speech. Not silence.

If all teachers, especially teachers of literature, were to stop being dispensers of information and "correct" interpretations, and instead begin to model for their students how texts are to be "played," were they to begin to legitimate and encourage in their students the active dynamics of response, thus fostering confidence in these responses, the great gulf between the formulaic best seller and the true classic might at last be bridged. Then critical reading which truly informs our sympathies would be within everyone's grasp, and response might once again become inner, not other, directed. □

Radical Schmaltz

Tad Szulc: *Diplomatic Immunity;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Valentino E. Martinez

Tad Szulc is a reporter of varied experience and certain repute. His first novel, which treats war and revolution in Central America, has been described as a work of "unforgettable power and conviction." It is nothing of the kind. As a novel, it is mediocre and predictable; as a political ukase, it is naive and foolish.

The plot is straightforward: a National Security Council assistant is sent to the Central American country of Malagua as an ambassador. She is liberal and liberated, but not obnoxiously so. Malagua is naturally torn by civil strife and disorder because a corrupt and venal dictator rules a hungry and unhappy populace. One of the revolutionary leaders is a handsome Jesuit who is torn by doubt, hot for rebellion, and soon summoned by the attractive ambassador, who believes that the United States should open up communications with the opposition. The local CIA station chief is a close friend of the dictator and opposes such a move. In keeping with the tenor of the times, the CIA man is portrayed as a murderer, blackmailer, drug trafficker, alcoholic and generally disloyal, dishonest and disingenuous. Predictably, the dictator and the station chief lose out in the end to the ambassador and the Jesuit, but only after 400-odd pages of revolutionary violence, government repression, stilted dialogue and political punditry that would make even an operative of the Socialist International blush.

There is little doubt that Mr. Szulc intends this novel to be prescriptive. The opposition leaders constantly berate the ambassador for America's preoccupation with communism and Cuba and explain how the United States must be neutral in Central America, that is, allow the revolutionaries to win and they *might* trust you in the future. Mr. Szulc apparently believes that American neutrality and/or economic assistance will serve to curb the irresistible revolutionary impulse to scotch the bourgeoisie. He is little bothered by the fact that Castro's political prisoners—including many who also fought Batista—languish in prison while the Maximum Leader exchanges epigrams with Barbara Walters. The Sandinistas, the Vietcong and many lesser paladins of "national liberation" are seen as romantic heroes fighting the relentless American imperialism. In reality, the sum total of the social revolution, Latin American style, is this: the secret police replace the National Guard, the Party replaces the dictator and yet another nation sends its revolutionary plenipotentiary to the United Nations to be warmly greeted by the American liberal press.

Obviously, Mr. Szulc's novel represents the garden-variety American liberalism that has absorbed the doctrine that the future inevitably belongs to the left. It is this attitude that decries the use of power and prestige by the United States and mobilizes tens of thousands to protest 50 American advisors in El Salvador. These advisors, of course, terrorize while the 18,000 Cubans in Angola merely stabilize. This warped logic is deeply etched in the minds of many of America's opinion-makers. That it is sanctimonious cant hardly matters; that it at times paralyzes national will is cause for concern. This is much more than the "Vietnam Syndrome." It is no longer a matter of avoiding overseas military involvements. What we are now witnessing is an increasing inability even to criticize despots who ruin their countries through revolutionary socialism and one-party rule. It is, in a word, the Ramsey Clark Syndrome. Virulent anti-Americanism is to be understood and tolerated for we have sinned against history by opposing the left's vision of mankind, and only the left has the right to condemn us and to announce our demise.

Karl Marx, in one of his more accurate fits of vituperation, described the character of Adolfe Thiers, French politician and historian. Marx wrote that Thiers was a French Sulla, "a master of petty-state roguery, a virtuoso in perjury and treason . . . never scrupling, when out of office, to fan a revolution, and to stifle it in blood when at the helm of state; with class prejudices standing him in the place of ideas, and vanity in the place of a heart." Thiers was, indeed, probably the most disagreeable apostle of petrified order in the 19th century;

Mr. Martinez is a foreign service officer at the American Embassy in Guatemala. This review reflects his personal opinions, not those of the U.S. government.

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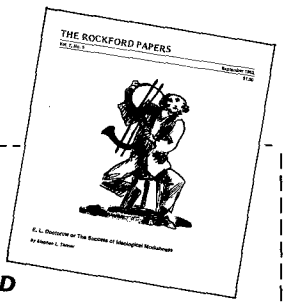

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even de Tocqueville seems to have held him in high disregard. Fortunately for France, she possessed other men, other leaders, other ideas. The third Republic, for example, survived its inauspicious beginnings—defeat in war and revolution at home—because it had a strong republican tradition. The majority of nations today do not possess such a tradition. Thus, the anticommunist alternative is often unattractive—*caudillos*, generals, warlords and worse.

One sees how the nature of our current debate is defined. Mr. Szulc and his fellow liberals perceive that the right is often corrupt and brutal, then illogically assign the exact oppposite qualities to the revolutionary opposition. Revolutionary leaders abroad take on the qualities of Robespierre the Incorruptible who once defined terror as nothing more than "inflexible virtue." In such situations quaint bourgeois customs—like the rule of law—fall rapidly by the wayside. The shoddiness of the "literary" production of the countless Szulcs who currently clutter the lowbrow cultural scene makes such simple truths pervasively painful. □

Eisenhower in War & Peace

Russell Weigley: *Eisenhower's Lieutenants;* Indiana University Press; Bloomington.

Blanche Wiessen Cook: *The Declassified Eisenhower: A Divided Legacy of Peace and Political Warfare;* Doubleday & Co.; New York.

by Paul H. Vivian

Some books are best read in front of a warm hearth while curled up on a soft chair with the book in one hand and a glass of dry sherry in the other. But Russell Weigley's *Eisenhower's Lieutenants* is not such a book. It is best read standing in front of a floor-to-ceiling operations map of Europe with grease pencils in one hand and, when not holding the book, a mug of beer chased by a stiff whiskey in the other. Not only are Russell Weigley's ideas heretical, but they are also well-substantiated and convincingly argued. Professor Weigley argues that many of the Allied generals were not very good at waging war. As a consequence, he asserts, the war in Europe lasted longer than necessary. Even more shocking, Weigley suggests that the American foot soldier was not as capable as his British counterpart or his German adversary.

While ostensibly a straight historical study of Eisenhower's principal subordinates, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants* is also an attempt to lend weight to the arguments of the "maneuver warfare" theorists. This is a school of thought that in recent years has gained popularity among "defense intellectuals." The adherents of this school have sharply criticized current American military doctrine as being too attrition-oriented. By this they mean that contemporary doctrine emphasizes the grinding down of the enemy, tank by tank, man by man, by superior application of firepower. The winner is usually the side with the best "kill-to-loss" ratio. Such tactics are viewed by maneuver theorists as being too crude, bloody and inflexible. In the place of attrition tactics, the maneuver school would employ a tactical doctrine which emphasizes mobility, speed and maneuver—above all maneuver. By the proper employment of these techniques, so the theory goes, the enemy can be deprived of the initiative, confused, cut off and defeated in detail. Such tactics, the maneuver theorists argue, will permit a numerically inferior force to defeat a superior one.

Using maneuver-warfare theory as the criteria by which to judge the performance of the principal Allied field commanders, Professor Weigley reaches the harsh conclusion that the Allied leadership in general and the American leadership in particular was not only less effective than it might have been, but that it also "lacked a clear conception of war." Because the American military establishment in the years prior to World War II did not effectively re-evaluate the assumptions underpinning the army's operational methods, the United States Army entered the war with a tactical doctrine that stressed attrition instead of maneuver and mobility at the expense of power. Mr. Weigley traces the origins of these assumptions to the unique historical experience of the American army and to operational concepts based in the American Civil War.

While deficient, perhaps, in tactical sophistication, the American officer corps was not without able men, a number of whom were especially effective at organizational and logistical matters. That the officer corps should have so many logistical experts was no doubt a reflection of the American culture of plenty; it was also a reflection of the fact that during the Civil War one of the North's most vexing problems was supply lines choked with too many supplies. The curriculum of the Command and General Staff College, through which virtually all senior American military leaders passed, devoted much attention to the problems of supply in war. In Weigley's view, this contributed to the creation of an American military leadership more adept at managing assets than at leading men in combat.

Considered against the criteria of maneuver-warfare theory, Dwight D. Eisenhower does not fare well. General Eisenhower favored fighting and advancing on a broad front. Use of the rapid, deep thrust into enemy territory preferred by the maneuver theorists found little favor with Eisenhower. Eisenhower steadfastly held to his strategy even though, in Weigley's judgment, the Allies lacked the manpower reserves, armaments, spare parts and ammunition

Mr. Vivian is research director of The American Spectator.

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to conduct such a campaign.

Of the three army group commanders (General Sir Bernard Montgomery, General Omar Bradley and General Jacob Devers) directly subordinate to Eisenhower, Montgomery emerges as the most able Allied field commander. Montgomery was a consummate maneuver theorist. General Eisenhower's assessment of Omar Bradley as the best Allied field commander in Europe is not shared by Weigley, who sees Bradley's leadership as seriously flawed. In particular, he takes Bradley to task for diverting an entire corps and 25,000 tons of ammunition for the capture of the port city of Brest, while 800 kilometers to the east, the main body of Allied forces was unable to exploit the German retreat into the Low Countries because of an acute shortage of manpower and ammunition. This allowed the Germans valuable time to regroup and strengthen defenses. When the Allied forces resumed the offensive, the Germans were able to extract a higher toll in Allied lives. As for the capture of Brest, it was a hollow victory.

Given Weigley's passionate support of maneuver warfare, one would assume the General "Blood and Guts" George Patton, commander of the Third Army, would fit Weigley's notion of the paragon maneuver-warfare commander. But while Patton's generalship was characterized by heavy emphasis on speed and mobility, it was also obsessed with occupying ground rather than with destroying enemy forces. Weigley substantiates his argument by pointing out that the spectacular speed of the Third Army's advance across France was accomplished by the avoidance of fighting. When forced to stop and fight, the Third Army's performance was not quite so impressive.

Nevertheless, Patton had a talent for waging war. His emphasis on speed and mobility was reflected in the common American soldier, who demonstrated a flair for war on wheels. The American soldier driving a tank or riding in an armored personnel carrier had no peer. Patton's genius derived from his ability to exploit the innate restlessness of the American soldier and to channel it into a driving, forward motion. But the American soldier was far from a perfect warrior. When his advance was slowed, and he was forced to dismount from his armored personnel carrier to fight a pitched battle, his aggressiveness waned. For instance, army studies showed that only 15 to 30 percent of the infantrymen ever fired their weapons in combat. The British, and especially Montgomery, were openly contemptuous of the American infantry.

At first the lack of aggressiveness in the American soldier was laid to his inexperience. But when the condition continued long after units were blooded and experienced, concern arose even among senior American military leaders. Montgomery attributed the problem to what he perceived as the poor quality of American leadership. Hitler, long advised of the phenomenon by his generals, suggested that it was because Americans had never been peasants; as free men, Ameri-

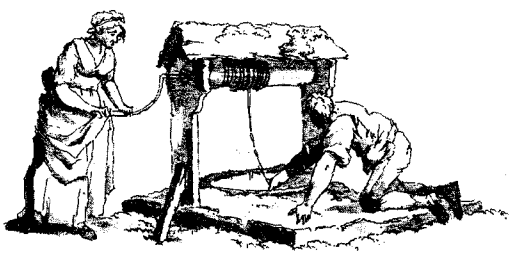
JOURNALISM

Saturday Review, R.I.P.

Saturday Review, the chief organ of schmaltz liberalism since the 1940's, has expired after a few years of terminal agony that, on occasion, produced more embarassment than disconsolation. Here is one of the bereaved, who continues to speculate on what *SR* could do if, by some miracle, it had survived, as he confided it to *Time* magazine, the noted organ of moral schlock:

> 'I like to think of *Saturday Review* as an antidote to the sleaziness that is invading our national culture, the cult of incoherence, the competition to pulverize language and glamorize brutality.' He paused. 'You bet I am tempted to return. But if I am wise, I will suppress the temptation.'

Who is expressing all those proper words, phrases and thoughts: "sleaziness" of the modish culture, "cult of incoherence," "glamorized brutality" which sound like the battle cry of the *Chronicles of Culture* or *The Rockford Papers* since their inception? Why none other than Mr. Norman Cousins, the longtime, emblematic editor of *SR.* Under his stewardship the journal became the mouthpiece and PR agent for the assorted liberations of the 1960's, all dressed in the glittering togs of hyperhumanitarianism—which, strangely enough, always ended up espousing the kind of pacifism that is most approvingly quoted by *Pravda* and *Literaturnya Gazieta.* Did Mr. Cousins give some clue to feeling any responsibility for the "sleaziness," "incoherence" or "brutality," all of which his blind obedience to the Liberal Culture's tenets helped to make triumphant? Unfortunately, he gave no hint of remorse. □



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cans had never learned to take orders unquestioningly. But it was clear to all—while the American soldier may lack aggressiveness in a pitched battle, he did not lack courage.

In war there is little time for reflection; one must make do with what one has. Consequently, Allied leaders only glanced at the problem and sought to turn the positive talents of the American soldier to best benefit. Yet the nagging question remained—why was the American soldier defiant on the defensive and so superb when in a fluid, mobile situation, but less effective in a slow, slugging battle? While Professor Weigley raises this question, he does not answer it. Others, however, have noted the reluctance of the American soldier to call out when in combat. S.L.A. Marshall, one of this country's most astute students of war, observed that small infantry formations often lose their tactical cohesion upon initial contact with the enemy because the men in the squad or platoon would lose contact with one another. At the first crack of a bullet, a soldier would quite correctly and naturally take cover behind the nearest bush or in the closest shell hole. But this would often cause him to lose sight of his comrades even though they might be only a few feet away. Unwilling to call out to ascertain the whereabouts of his fellows, a sense of isolation would overcome the soldier and with it an enervating fear. Marshall found that if the soldiers were taught to shout to one another and thus demonstrate by the sound of their voices that they were not alone on the battlefield, then the unit would keep its cohesion and would be able to resume its advance. Marshall's suggestions were incorporated into the army's training program to good effect in the Korean War. Unfortunately, the program of the Infantry School at Fort Benning gives no evidence to suggest that Marshall's insights are still being heeded.

In autumn 1981 the *New York Times* reported on a conference held in upstate New York to discuss the Eisenhower Presidency. In attendance were former advisers and friends of the late President as well as a number of professional historians, including several prominent liberal scholars. Considering the nature of the gathering, the casual observer would expect not only the usual descriptions of Eisenhower's warm and engaging personality, but also the usual dribble of "academic" analyses of Eisenhower as the unintelligent, lazy, weak and politically unsophisticated President. But times have changed. Since the late 1970's, a quiet and generally more positive evaluation of the Eisenhower years has emerged. Blanche Wiessen Cook's *The Declassified Eisenhower: A Divided Legacy of Peace and Political Warfare* is an additional contribution to this process of re-evaluation.

What is curious about this re-evaluation is that it should have taken place at all. However, in spite of the fact that the Eisenhower years were ones of peace, economic prosperity and social progress, most of the initial evaluations of President Eisenhower were negative. Indeed, shortly after he left office, Eisenhower was rated 21st among all Presidents, near Chester Arthur, in a poll conducted by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

The poor appreciation initially accorded the Eisenhower Presidency by scholars stemmed from its success. The academic community was predominantly liberal, even more so then than now. Rather than appreciating the Eisenhower achievements for what they were, the academics unleashed wild expectations among American liberals. Subdued for two decades, first by war and then by the cretinism of "unprogressive" Presidents, these expectations were nurtured on the legacy of the New Deal and on theoretical constructs developed in the newly enriched social-science faculties. Suddenly with the onset of the New Frontier and the Great Society it seemed that all these noble dreams at last would be fulfilled. And when these hopes and wishes were compared against the realities of the Eisenhower Presidency, the Eisenhower tenure seemed dull, trivial, disappointing.

But while for many the early 60's were years of optimism, the late 60's and early 70's were ones of increasing disillusionment. Poverty still existed, illiteracy seemed to be increasing, racial injustice was still with us, economic growth was decreasing and peace had eluded us for over a decade. Considered against this backdrop, the achievements of the Eisenhower White House are much more respectable.

Blanche Wiessen Cook was attracted to Dwight D. Eisenhower, the statesman. Taking advantage of recently opened and declassified Eisenhower archives, Blanche Cook presents a view of him which is distinctly at odds with the one seen by most academics in the early 60's. For Professor Cook, President Eisenhower "was the most undervalued and misunderstood statesman of the twentieth century." Although a soldier by profession, he was a "presidential pacifist." Often perceived as a naive babe in the woods, Cook shows that, contrary to the popular perception, Eisenhower was politically sophisticated and well-informed. An incurable romantic, perhaps, he believed that men given a fair chance will ultimately choose good over evil. What the good was, Eisenhower never doubted: the American model, a democracy with safeguards for individual liberty and a prosperous economy based on the principles of free enterprise. Overall, Eisenhower saw his foreign policy as a propaganda effort to win the "hearts and minds" of the world away from the pernicious influence of communism. But Eisenhower, the Presidential pacifist, also understood the efficacy of force, which he felt was most effective when it was not used but threatened. To date, most of the historical re-evaluations of Eisenhower have focused primarily on his foreign-policy accomplishments. One can only hope that further studies such as Blanche Cook's will emerge that will focus on other aspects and so provide us with a fuller, more accurate picture of the Eisenhower Presidency. □

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THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST THE ECONOMY

George Reisman

Foreword by
William E. Simon

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- Why the Arab Oil Embargo Would Not Have Been a Threat to a Free Economy
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- Hoarding and Speculation Not Responsible for Shortages
- The Destruction of the Utilities and the Other Regulated Industries
- The Campaign Against the Profits of the Oil Companies
- How the U.S. Government, Not the Oil Companies, Caused the Oil Shortage
- The Conspiracy Theory of Shortages
- How Repeal of Rent Controls Would Restore Harmony Between Landlords and Tenants
- How Price Controls Actually Raise Prices
- The Case for the Immediate Repeal of Rent Controls
- The Prosperity Delusion of Price Controls: The World War II "Boom"
- The Real Solution To Inflation

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In the last third of *The Government Against the Economy* you will get a vivid and memorable demonstration of the ultimate consequences of price controls if present policies continue. Reisman describes the chaos created by partial price controls, the imposition of universal price controls to correct the chaos created by partial controls, and the *de facto* socialization of the economic system that must finally follow. The chaos and tyranny of socialism, its necessary reliance on terror and forced labor, and its ultimate collapse in the absence of outside aid are all discussed in an impassioned detail that should make every lover of freedom want to stand up and fight for capitalism.

WHAT THE REVIEWERS HAVE SAID:

- Every commentator on current affairs who is not a fully trained economist ought to read this book if he wants to talk sense. I know no other place where the crucial issues are explained as clearly and convincingly as in this book.
  —F. A. Hayek, Nobel Laureate in Economics for 1974
- This is one of the most powerful and convincing books I know. Its explanations are brilliantly clear; its analyses are lethal; it is uncompromising.
  —Henry Hazlitt, Author, former *Newsweek* columnist and *New York Times* financial editor
- The book is lucid throughout; the effects of price controls are described in prose as clear as it is chilling. Reisman's book would serve as an excellent introduction to economic thinking.
  —*Barron's*
- The best introduction to real economic understanding I know of. The exposition is irresistably persuasive.
  —*Human Events*
- Dr. Reisman gives us Economics 101 as it should be taught.
  —*Reason*
- . . . a good, concentrated course in economics for the intelligent noneconomist.
  —*Chronicles of Culture*
- I dipped into Reisman's book soon after it arrived, quickly became hooked, and finished reading it in short order. It does a magnificent job of explaining general economic interdependence and the logic of the price system.
  —Leland Yeager, Professor of Economics, University of Virginia
- I began to dip into *The Government Against the Economy* and soon found my attention riveted to it. I then dropped almost everything else until I had read it through. An absolutely first class work.
  —Arthur Shenfield, Former Chairman, Confederation of British Industries
- The best account of the idiocy of price controls that I have read anywhere.
  —D. T. Armentano, Professor of Economics, University of Hartford
- One is struck by a feeling of profound respect for the explanatory power of abstract principles.
  —*The Intellectual Activist*
- The simplest, clearest, and most retainable exposition of the function of prices that I have ever read. The book can be read either as a textbook or as a dissection of current economic events; due to Dr. Reisman's thorough integration of theory with practice, it is both.
  —*The Objectivist Forum*

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COMMENDABLES

The Bonaparte Caper

Ben Weider and David Hapgood: ***The Murder of Napoleon;*** Congdon & Lattès; New York.

by Daniel B. Dallas

History, which deals kindly and often extravagantly with the life of Napoleon, tends to ignore his death. "Stomach cancer" is the terse autopsy report in this reviewer's college text. But in October 1961 the British scientific journal *Nature* published an article which stated that Napoleon was the victim of arsenic poisoning. This story reverberated through other publications, then settled into somnolence—until now. Consider the following:

The memoirs of Louis Marchand, Napoleon's valet, are published in 1955. Marchand wrote his memoirs for his family, not for publication. A descendant feels that they rightfully belong to history. A Swedish dentist named Sten Forshufvud, who is an accomplished toxicologist and Napoleon buff, recognizes some 20 of the 32 symptoms of arsenic poisoning in Marchand's history of Napoleon's final years. The syndrome of arsenic poisoning was not known until 1930; Marchand did not recognize the import of his words. During the 50's a scientist named Hamilton Smith at the University of Edinburgh develops a method of detecting poison in human hair through nuclear bombardment. The technique grows in sophistication so that eventually, given a single hair from a victim of chronic arsenic poisoning, Smith can divide the hair according to daily growth and then construct a chronology showing the amounts of poison administered each day. The sophisticated French will now certainly use the science of Smith to verify the testimony of Marchand. But no official word is forthcoming and when Forshufvud begins his own investigation he finds that the French are not interested in cooperating with a Swedish dentist who entertains curious ideas related to the death of their Emperor.

The authors of this text now present the reader with two stories that run on parallel tracks via alternating chapters. On one track the reader follows the emperor from the time of his surrender to Captain Maitland of the *Bellerophon* to his final agonized gasp on St. Helena. The reader can only watch helplessly as the slow process of arsenic poisoning strips away the layers of greatness and grandeur, leaving an obese, querulous invalid who is quite aware that he is being systematically poisoned. On the other track the reader follows the indefatigable Dr. Forshufvud who has all but abandoned his dental practice (1) to prove that Napoleon was poisoned, and (2) to name his assassin. His success is such that in 1961 he and Prof. Smith can co-author the *Nature* article. Proving arsenic poisoning to the reader's satisfaction is no problem. Napoleonic hair samples are obtained from people in countries as widely separated as Switzerland and Australia. They prove and prove again that Napoleon died of chronic arsenic poisoning.

But who did it? The British, who were spending a quarter of a million pounds annually to maintain a garrison of 3,000 soldiers, five warships and six brigs at St. Helena just to guarantee that never again would the genie get out of the bottle? Or was it the French, most especially the Bourbons and most specifically the Count d'Artois, a formidable adversary who had spent a quarter of a century plotting the death of Napoleon? One by one, Forshufvud eliminates all possible assassins save one—the only one who cannot be provided an ironclad alibi. It is then a matter of encasing this candidate in a cocoon spun of unbreakable threads of circumstantial evidence. The reader, be he a Napoleon buff or who-done-it lover, is the ultimate judge. □

Mr. Dallas is editorial director of Manufacturing Engineering *magazine.*

In Praise of Complete Criticism

Marion Montgomery: ***Why Flannery O'Connor Stayed Home: The Prophetic Poet and the Spirit of the Age;*** Sherwood Sugden & Co.; LaSalle, Illinois.

Almost fifty years ago T.S. Eliot observed in his "Religion and Literature" that "literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint." Literature wrought by an artist such as Flannery O'Connor, who professed "preoccupations with belief and with death and grace and the devil," especially demands such "completed" criticism. However, among modern scholar-critics, profoundly innocent of ethics and religion, this demand is seldom met. While feverishly categorizing the structural patterns they encounter, contemporary scholars are often blind to the divine light streaming through the casement of some of such patterns. But with eyes quickened both by academic sophistication and by Christian faith, Marion Montgomery has written a truly completed criticism of O'Connor's oeuvre which perceptively analyzes her creative accomplishments within the illuminating glow of the sacred doctrines they celebrate.

Respectful of the integrity of O'Connor's fiction as art not tract, Montgomery analyzes her tortuous—sometimes bizarre and grotesque—aesthetic strategy for depicting, as she put it, "the action of grace in territory held largely by the devil" for "an audience which puts little stock either in grace or the devil." By setting these unusual strategies against the backdrop of an extensive analysis of the historical trends in literature, philosophy, and religion which have made the function of the poet-prophet ambiguous and difficult, this study clarifies their rare value in a metaphysically impoverished age. Readers who do not share Montgomery's orthodox Catholic convictions will sometimes disagree with his commentary, but no devotee of Miss O'Connor can seriously object to criticism completed from precisely that "definite ethical and theoloical standpoint" that she herself held. Even students of literature not particularly interested in O'Connor will find Montgomery's assessment of our cultural ambiance provocative and penetrating. Indeed, most readers will be glad that in one promising sense this completed criticism is incomplete: it is only the first volume of a trilogy. (BC) □

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IN FOCUS

Between Karen & Isak

Isak Dinesen: ***Letters from Africa, 1914-1931;*** edited by Frans Lasson; University of Chicago Press; Chicago.

by Joseph Schwartz

A careful comparative study of these letters by Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen) with her personal memoir, *Out of Africa* (1937), shows how real the differences are between Blixen as letter-writer and Blixen as story-teller. *Out of Africa,* a *succès d'estime* of its time, was written ten years after her return to Denmark. In it she shaped her material as an old-fashioned story-teller would. She took liberty with factual data in order to form a narrative in what one critic has called a mode of recital.

> I have always thought that I might have cut a figure at the time of the plague in Florence. Fashions have changed, and the art of listening to a narrative has been lost in Europe. The natives of Africa, who cannot read, have still got it; if you begin to them: "There was a man who walked out on the plain, and there he met another man," you have them all with you, their minds running upon the unknown track of the men on the plain. But white people, even if they feel they ought to, cannot listen to a recital.

The success of that memoir served to contradict her sense of the European appreciation of narrative as racial. Try yourself, as I did recently, to test this theory. "There was a man who was walking down Wisconsin Avenue, and he ran into an acquaintance. They . . ." You will have them all with you, no matter what their age and color.

The letters are much more immediate, less polished, more tentative than her fiction—in short, a portrait of the young Karen Blixen. Things rightly omitted from *Out of Africa* loom large in the letters: the failure of her marriage, her continuing bout with syphilis, her affair with Denys Finch Hatton and his unexpected death. Her mother and brother particularly brought out the best in Blixen as a correspondent. With neither of them could she be carelessly candid. Hence the letters are paradoxically more "real" than they would be if they were written with no restraint at all.

Above all else, one subject dominates the letters, aside from the overwhelming presence of her love for Africa. Blixen had severe problems in coming to terms with her womanhood. Much of this seems to occur after the failure of her marriage—a failure she strongly resisted. But once it was accepted, Blixen became strangely concerned with questions of sex, marriage, birth control and so on. As if in reaction to her formerly accepted idea of commitment in marriage, she indicated that the key to her character was her desire not to possess anyone or be possessed by anyone. This is quite the opposite of the message of writers like Evelyn Waugh, who feel that to love another human being is the root of all wisdom. This arms-length attitude appears also to be the result of her troubled affair with Denys Finch Hatton. It is clear that she was much fonder of him than he was of her, that his commitment was tenuous at best. Because she did not or could not become pregnant, there is much muddled thinking about birth control, eugenics and the future of the race through controlled breeding. "I prize my freedom above everything else that I possess." Well, yes and no. It is evident that for either her husband or her lover, she would have exchanged gladly this peculiar modern idea of freedom for the commitment based on a promise.

Her failures were in Africa, the most important place in her life: "I have a feeling that wherever I may be in the future, I will be wondering whether there is rain at Ngong." The failures were commercial and social, but most of all personal. Her success as a writer came later in Denmark, when the personal element had been removed, so to speak, and she could stand at a distance from her subject. Maybe she was as cool as she said she was.

Karen Blixen was a peculiar mixture of differences. As an aristocrat, she was deeply moved by the 17 years of feudallike life in Africa. Her works seem to show that she was suspicious of scientific thought; she made jokes about the common man, and she felt that progress was an illusion. Yet she swallowed whole most of the tiresome clichés concerning women which have since been labeled feminism. Her fiction was patently conservative; none of the experiments in point of view, use of time or character which characterized her era are found in her work. In the end she seems more like Jane Bowles than like Katherine Anne Porter, deserving of respectful brevity. □

Dr. Schwartz teaches English at Marquette University.

Pilgrim's Plummet

An Abyss Deep Enough: Letters of Heinrich von Kleist; **edited by Philip B. Miller;** E.P. Dutton; New York.

by Bryce Christensen

Heinrich von Kleist is known primarily as an artist whose fiction and drama have thrilled sensitive readers as diverse as Kafka and Brahms. His letters, translated and edited by Philip B. Miller, reveal that as earnestly as he sought aesthetic beauty, he craved religious truth. "My real interests in my heart," Kleist wrote, are "these sacred interests, these *religious* endowments, these bequests of my *own* religion." Miller even suggests that Kleist's letters "recall . . . a now secularized and dubious Pilgrim's Progress." Dubious indeed. Unlike the upward journey of Bunyan's Christian into light and salvation, Kleist's is a despairing descent into darkness and death. The terminus of this hopeless pilgrimage was not a triumphal entry into the Celestial City but a desperate leap into the dark abyss of suicide—taking another man's wife with him. The coroner's report correctly conjectured that Kleist's death was attributable to "a general excess of religious enthusiasm."

Inexplicably, contemporary intellectuals who sneer at expressions of religious faith are remarkably sympathetic to the

Mr. Christensen is an editorial intern at the Chronicles.

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"religious enthusiasm" of despair. Such moderns are, indeed, the least tolerant of zealots and loudly scorn the faith of orthodox Jewish or Christian communities, but can scarcely restrain their hosannas when a solitary preacher of despondency appears. In harmony with this modish unfaith, Miller brusquely dismisses the "conventional solutions" of "religious ceremony and conventional prescripts" which Kleist rejected, while worshipfully styling him as a visionary prophet of existentialism, the heroic discoverer of despair as a "valid response" to life's difficulties. It would doubtless be both presumptuous and vain for mere believers to ask Mr. Miller why he endorses Kleist's devotional predilections when, from our perspective, they promise nothing and can but lead to suicidal violence. Such a question would prompt only a condescending smile—or polite contempt. Mr. Miller reverently uses as epigraph to this saint's epistles a lobotomized version of Hamlet's famous query: ". . . not to be." An iconic preference for nothingness, *nihil*, over existence is beyond the realm of rational argument. Those whose faith inspires the contrary option can only respond with another line from Hamlet: "*That* has no relish of salvation in't." □

Cassady's Legacy

William Plummer: *The Holy Goof: A Biography of Neal Cassady;* Prentice-Hall; Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

The Beats, the Beat Generation, Beatniks—for anyone of the postwar generation the words conjure images of dark, smoky coffee houses where sit bearded young men and leotard-clad young women earnestly and fervently discussing existentialism over their espresso. Beat evokes bongo drums, offbeat poetry, strange musical rhythms. But these were only the trappings, the symbols, of the real Beats. Jack Kerouac, touted as King of the Beats, and Neal Cassady, their "muse," scarcely fit the innocent, slightly dimwitted Maynard G. Krebs image. Kerouac & Co. were not, at least not deliberately, spawning new fads or fashions but experimenting with a whole new way of living—they created a lifestyle before lifestyle was invented.

Neal Cassady, who inspired the character of Dean Moriarty in Kerouac's *On the Road,* is examined by Mr. Plummer along with the beginnings of the Beat Generation, which evolved into what is popularly called the counterculture. Neal Cassady and "poet" Alan Ginsberg bridged the two, while the rest of the personalities around them seemed to belong fairly completely to one subculture or the other. Jack Kerouac personified the Beats, Ken Kesey the hippies.

Cassady had a horrific nonchildhood, very little of it even approaching anything which might resemble normalcy. It is obvious that such continuous intimacy with the maladjusted, abnormal, even perverted characters who peopled his early years would inevitably produce serious, permanent kinks and warps in any personality. Cassady's life perfectly expressed, even elaborated upon, such an expectation.

Mr. Plummer has done a creditable job in researching Cassady's life and his role within the Beat culture. He chronicles Cassady's several (sometimes simultaneous) marriages, his legendary journeys and, by way of letters and close friends' and one wife's memories, his twisted and tortured psyche. For tortured it was; if ever there was an epitome of personal self-destructiveness, Cassady was it.

But Neal Cassady has become a legend, a contemporary myth; his name conveys a mystique. He has been hailed by some as a hero, a celebrity, an eccentric genius, the "holy goof." What was the legacy of Cassady & Co.? The 1960's—acid trips, do your own thing, let it all hang out. This is what Neal Cassady helped to create. Among the photographs selected by Mr. Plummer are some of Cassady at a few gatherings of the 60's flower children. It's a pathetic sight—a man in his forties, with thinning hair and the suggestion of a paunch, amid the naive young men and women who chose to follow him down his own path toward self-immolation. Somehow countercultural trappings seem to wear better on the young. Most of the 60's youth adopted only those trappings—they did some grass, dropped a little LSD and wore all the properly ragged peasant styles. For a while they adopted the creed of Cassady et al., whereby "the usual standards of morality did not apply." But most of them—eventually—grew up and "sold out" to "the establishment"; that is, they are now working for a living, paying their own way, raising children. There were many, however, who could not manage that transition. In the words of one of Cassady's hippie comrades: "All along the roadside you see the smattered and charred and twisted remains of people who had fairly loose heads and who, in an effort to emulate Cassady, burned themselves. . . . who read *On the Road* and were turned on by the Prankster mystique and who wanted nothing more than to be Neal Cassady. They'd take a lot of pills and they'd fry their brains and that would be it." This, too, is part of the Cassady legacy. (RJW) □

In the Mail

"The International Labor Organization: Mirroring the U.N.'s Problems" by Walter Galenson; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C. This first U.N. study from The Heritage Foundation shows why the U.S. must have a more aggressive posture in the ILO.

***Continuity: A Journal of History* edited by Paul Gottfried; Intercollegiate Studies Institute; Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.** This conduit for alternative historical perspectives features essays by Gottfried, Lee Congdon, Thomas Molnar, and others.

***Vikingstaff* edited by Garman Lord; Endwork Press, Watertown, New York.** A somewhat bizarre magazine full of Nordic lore and nonsense.

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Perceptibles

Larry R. Williams: ***How to Prosper in the Coming GOOD Years;*** Regnery Gateway; Chicago.

Books of investment advice for the general public are written as much to entertain as to inform. Mr. Williams's book and others of its genre cater to a sort of financial voyeurism by instructing readers in the intricacies of lucrative investment schemes—but few readers are likely to have the capital and the information to take advantage of them.

Mr. Williams is a professional commodity trader and investment advisor, and the sound introduction he provides to technical analysis of price movements in the securities and commodities markets is the strongest part of his book. One could not expect to trade securities profitably using only the simple decision rules Williams presents here, but his frequent references to more advanced studies provide a useful guide even for financially unsophisticated readers.

Williams's discussions of real estate, lending transactions and entertainment investing are studded with enjoyable anecdotes about investors who managed to make enormous profits, but the scale and complexity of most of the projects he describes place them beyond the reach of small investors. The reader finishes the book feeling perhaps more optimistic about the possibilities for profitable investment and for economic growth in general, but he is scarcely better equipped to engage in these sorts of transactions than when he started.

Williams's background as a technical analyst helps him to avoid the worst excesses of some conservative writers and commentators, who often seem to suggest that the application of the economic policies of the Reagan administration is sufficient for prosperity and profitable investing over the next decade. The central theme of two decades of conservative scholarship is that government attempts to regulate economic activity, whether through rent controls, minimum-wage laws, health and safety rules or formal rate regulation, are at best wasteful and at worst counterproductive.

It is a mystery why any conservative would expect a government apparatus unable to intervene sensibly in invidual markets to be able to effectively oversee the activities of the entire economy, merely because a new tribe of politicos occupies the highest offices. Some even suspect that the notion that governments can manage the economy at all is nothing but a gigantic imposture by macroeconomists, who are often seen on the same level of intellectual respectability as palmists, phrenologists and sociologists. Mr. Williams and his attentive followers will probably fare well in the marketplace, as their politically inspired optimism is supported and tempered by attention to technical analysis. Investors who allow their enthusiasm for the present administration to overwhelm their awareness of the inherent difficulties of directing the economy may suffer unpleasant and costly surprises. (GDA) □

Gratuitous Nihilism

Madison Jones: ***Season of the Strangler;*** Doubleday & Co.; New York.

The dustcover of Madison Jones's *Season* promises the reader "a stunning novel of fear and revelation—a novel that charts the misguided, often tragic striving of the human soul for completion." The reader will find something less within the cover. Jones's book does aim at significantly more than the cheap mystery-thriller its title seems to suggest: he never even reveals the identity of the Strangler. For his purposes, it does not matter. What does matter is the ambiance of terror and death which the Strangler's five murders create within the twelve short stories (the book is no novel) in which Jones examines the lives of twelve of Okaloosa's inhabitants during the summer in which the Strangler commits his murders. In his stories, Jones creates diverse—black, white, rich, poor—characters: his claim to be a "serious craftsman" will survive the removal of the dustcover which so styles him.

What is wrong with Jones's book derives from a failure of vision. The dustcover promises of "stunning fear and revelation" cannot be fulfilled because Jones's essentially nihilistic vision permits no revelation—and finally no fear. His characters—a worldly old doctor, a deranged minister, a henpecked shoe salesman, an aging black laborer, an adulterous housewife—all *begin* their respective stories in worlds of fear. In particular, all fear the meaninglessness which seems to be ineluctably enveloping them. Like the old man in Jones's first story, all of the characters feel "vaguely alarmed" by the seemingly indifferent and confusing world which presses in on them. In different ways—sexual adventurism, public generosity, racial hatred, profession of faith—they all try to break out of their solitary and petty worlds into something larger. In the end, though, meaninglessness wins. Neither vicarious psychopathy, nor sexual intrigues, nor fervent expressions of faith can forestall the collapse. Jones seems indeed to have abandoned the typical thriller plot formula only to substitute a nihilistic one which is so predictable that it ends in caricatures. If, in a moment of lucid self-examination, Jones's characters discover how empty and trivial their lives are, they promptly make them *more* empty and trivial by doing something deranged or foolish. Unlike real human beings who make genuine choices between good and evil, his characters are merely puppets in open conflict with dustcover promises of a portrayal of "the tragic strivings of the human soul for completion." (BC) □

WASTE OF MONEY

War and Peace for the Kids

C.W. Schmidt: ***Marta;*** Suter; Santa Cruz, California.

Entertainment-seeking adolescents will probably find this novel satisfactory. Set in World War II Europe, the action is fast-paced and crisply narrated. Its central romance between the Jewish heroine Marta and the Luftwaffe pilot Hans is of the schmaltzy sort. The emotional and ideological conflicts are all neatly defined and reassuringly

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resolved in a happy ending. The characters are about as human as the Luftwaffe fighter planes that are described in painstaking detail. When not convulsing with grief or exulting with joy, everyone in the novel seems intent upon speech-making. Schmidt has not learned the value of understatement. The examination of the psychic significance of fascism and anti-Semitism is superficial, offering little more than cliché and stereotype. While the values affirmed—faith in God, tolerance, commitment to duty—are unexceptionable, the exploration of these values is too facile to be illuminating. Even the plot is weak, relying too heavily on hairsbreadth escapes and improbable coincidences. After watching Hans's Messerschmidt explode in "a ball of fire and oblivion" in the penultimate chapter only to learn five pages later than Hans miraculously escaped serious injury, the reader cannot but feel that he is dealing with a comic-strip serial. (BC) □

Truth through Blab

Mark Baker: ***Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women who Fought There;*** William Morrow & Co.; New York.

Perceptive things have occasionally been written on the stalls of men's rooms. Not many, though, and an indiscriminate compilation of rest-room graffiti would probably read something like the chaotic jumble Mark Baker offers in *Nam*. Baker's assemblage of Vietnam war stories, collected through interviewing hundreds of Vietnam vets, does provide the raw material for a book, but unfortunately the reader will have to write it. Baker has chosen simply to dump his research between two boards and to call it a book. *Nam* is not even a good source book: there's no index and no effort to organize this random collection of vignettes beyond clumping them into eight groups under such discriminating headings as "Victors," "Victims," and "Baptism of Fire." He provides no identification, not even generic, of the sources of his material, and he haphazardly juxtaposes the deranged ravings of the sadistic lunatic with the perceptive observations of the conscientious soldier, with nothing in between but three asterisks. This, we suppose, he sees as a dramatic cognitive achievement. Most of the recollections gathered seem to address such philosophically subtle interview questions as, What

was your most awful experience in the war? The answer, as Baker sees it, consists of short, modishly cynical blurbs at the head of each section—and a pretentious preface which arrogantly announces that this hash "may bring us closer to the truth than we have come so far." Yet Mr. Baker admits that many Vietnam vets refused to talk with him. This makes sense to us. Not too many men bother to scrawl their thoughts on rest-room walls. (BC) □

A Star Burns Out

Robert A. Heinlein: ***Friday;*** Holt, Rinehart & Winston; New York.

As it's practiced today, science fiction is at least one of three things. At the most basic level, it is a vehicle for an adventure story, wherein it is not unlike a Western, war story, detective novel, thriller, or Tarzan tale. It can be a form in which the author is able to experiment with the craft of fiction. In a few of his novels—*The Sheep Look Up,* most notably—John Brunner, for example, uses some of Marshall McLuhan's theories of communication in structuring the works; Phillip Jose Farmer often pays homage to James Joyce and other writers in his adventure science fiction. Finally, it can be a soapbox from which the author is able to criticize his society by extrapolating what *could be* from what *is,* or by creating a more-ideal (utopia) or less-ideal (distopia) society that serves as a contrast to the present. The third approach has been used for centuries, from Bacon to Huxley to many of those practicing science fiction today.

Science fiction is experiencing a certain vogue that is unusual in its history. This is evidenced most clearly by the popularity of science fiction-based films, such as the progenitor of the recent spate, *Star Wars,* which has been correctly criticized as nothing more than a refurbished horse opera. In the 50's and 60's, science-fiction movies—even those now hailed as "greats," such as *Forbidden Planet* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*—rated nothing more than the "B" grade; the television show "Star Trek" was unceremoniously cut from NBC's lineup with protests only from approximately the same number of loyalists that most TV shows have. Sociologists, busy trying to explain why this resurgence in science fiction exists on an unparalleled scale, are putting forth such theories as the one that things are so bad in the world that people need to escape, which can be done most readily through science fiction. Which is nonsense. In a less-introspective age, detective stories and films—think of Chandler and Bogart—were accepted simply as forms of entertainment, period. Today's prime consumers are products of the post-World War II baby boom, which means that they were brought up with the U.S. space program: how many spent nights in pajamas on their front lawns looking for the Echo satellite to pass by? There should be little wonder that they readily accept science fiction.

Robert A. Heinlein is 75. He has been writing science fiction for some 40 years. This means he was writing it when the primary form of publication was the pulp magazine. *Friday,* although it is a novel of respectable size and scope, is nothing more than a pulp story, gushing dust-jacket comments from leading science-fiction authors nothwithstanding—comments that may simply be the result of veneration for age. Heinlein's book (the forty-third bearing his name) is a combination of the first and third approaches stated above: it is an adventure story and it is a criticism of the modern world. While certain authors are able to combine the two—and it is in this respect that Wells shines in the science-fiction sky—here it seems that Heinlein wasn't able to make up his mind whether he wanted a spy-type adventure or a propaganda tract against prejudice (not black and white, but natural and artificial people, test-tube creations perfected). The consequences are sad. (GV)

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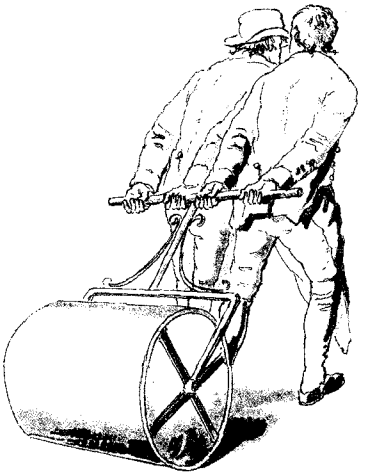
Men to Man: a Duologue

Diner: **Written and directed by Barry Levinson; MGM.**

by Eric Shapearo

One big cheer for a movie in which humanness—with all its weaknesses, foibles and modest strengths—does not run against humans (as is *de rigeur* in modish literature and its byproduct, popular moviemaking). It's a refreshing change to see a movie in which decency, loyalty, friendship do not ruin existences and drag stuporous wrecks of humanity to their prescribed habitats—the jungle of psychoanalytical couches, the swamps of abominable marriages, the purgatories of self-realization, the Bosch-like limbo of human-potential centers and psychiatric clinics, and finally to the most unsavory treat of Hollywood's beloved symbolization—a depraved penitentiary. In *Diner,* there is no gourmet destruction of the individual or society but, on the contrary, a humble enrichment of man through other men, of a cluster of people through the very rudiments of unpretentious realism. The rulers of today's Hollywood seem unable to understand one simple truth: that excessive pessimism turns as quickly into caricature, meaninglessness and boredom as mindless optimism does.

Diner is an unassuming antidote: it finds its way between the vagaries of sadness and premonition and hope and warmth, among the natural complexities of basic relationships and uninspiring everydayness. What results is a miniphilosophy of friendly, post-Darwinian naturalism in which man does not eat man, but enjoys his being next to himself and tries to communicate his feelings of acceptance or disappointment with the meager means which are offered to him by his not-too-original personality and not-too-elevated grasp of what life is all about. This is not particularly enlightening, in comparison to what the 20th-century creative culture has tried to convey to



us, but it is a welcome reprieve from the fashionable highbrow and middlebrow cultural fare that sees artistic virtue and cognition in freakish obfuscation and outright lies about us. The tale of five men who wrestle with the minor traps of living their youth, and whose defense against existential defeat is endless talking, has a curious healing potential. The moviegoer quickly understands *Diner's* difference from the routine cinematic fix—it is the same as the difference between health food and a nourishing, tasty, honest-to-goodness American hamburger.

* * *

by Stephen Macaulay

"Who's the best singer—Frank Sinatra or Johnny Mathis?" he demands, explaining that the answer is "important" to him. White shirt, tie, sports coat.

"Elvis Presley," replies the young man with hair slicked by pomade, an iridescent suit, gold jewelry including a class ring on a chain around his neck, and presumably thick-and-thin stockings covered by shiny black shoes known as points.

The answer is right for the speaker, wrong for the auditor. It doesn't mean anything; it really doesn't matter. It's just idle chatter in a diner at 3 a.m., not the Fitzgeraldian 3 a.m., when grand struggles commence among mind, body, and soul, but the 3 a.m. when men—boys, actually—in their early twenties meet to idle away time because the dance is over and the bars are closed. A diner in Baltimore in 1959. Five young men: a greaser, a Wasp, a married man, a rebel, a fan. They really don't mean anything in the grand scheme of life: except for the fact that Fitzgeralds are rare and that they are typical of the people one passes on the streets every day in any city, types who don't wonder if they're leading lives of quiet desperation, but rather remember the times when they had good times, who think that they "have a history," as one character in *Diner* puts it, without realizing that each day adds another line or paragraph to their chronicle. The brief interrogation is indicative of this attitude or approach to life. It points up to the fact that communication between individuals is an extraordinarily difficult thing to effect, not because of the background noise or interference that people like Norbert Wiener and Michel Serres describe, but simply because there is little to *say*. However, friendship and love are not based on verbal communication. Actual statements between lovers and/or friends are more often than not trivial ("Ask me what's on the flip side of any 45," "Who was the leading wide receiver for the Colts in 19--"). They communicate through proximity, through closeness. When this isn't achieved and maintained there is a falling apart and the answer to a question about the leading pop singer becomes a frame for a bitter exchange.

Diner is a slight movie—spare, not anemic. A diner in Baltimore in 1959. Five young men: $2000 lost in a bet on a basketball game and no money to pay it; a pregnant friend who begins to take on the image of a wife; a marriage in which

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Mr. Macaulay is a frequent contributor to the Chronicles.

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the spouses begin to lose touch; a family lost because of differing values; an impending marriage in a life whose dominant concern was once which team would win the football championship. The beat of these lives is kept by rhythm and blues and rock 'n' roll—James Brown, Jerry Lee Lewis. It's not important music with important lyrics ("Everyone SHOUT!—a little bit louder now. . . ."), but that which these five share as a touchstone. It's a driving sound whose repetitious cries of exuberance sometimes become annoying: when the bet is lost, the car radio is punched repeatedly. It is the right music at the wrong time. But tomorrow night is a different story, but the same story. They'll meet, chew french fries and gravy, and swap stories—talk about their "history." They won't discuss their dreams as philosophers would; they'll speak of their fears and desires as men of action do. In Baltimore in 1959—or Houston, Detroit, Boston, Los Angeles in 1982—action doesn't amount to much in a romantic sense of gesture. But that doesn't make it any less important. □

Binary Codes & the Miracle of Man

***Tron;* Screenplay by Steven Lisberger; Directed by Steven Lisberger; Walt Disney Productions.**

Forget *Tron* as a movie. It is nothing of the sort. Certainly there is plenty of action and a plot line, which separate it from what are known as *films,* those creations of European directors and their domestic devotees. *Tron* is akin to Abel Gance's *Napoleon,* not the version that Francis Ford Coppola brought back from the archives, but the one that Gance partially destroyed in response to the fact that his panoramic, three-screen approach was aborted by the advent of "talking pictures." Gance struggled to push the limits of film, to stretch the frame. How well he succeeded is now known only by a few, those who retain the images in now-fading memories. The rest of us can only extrapolate. We can see something of the same efforts being made in *Tron,* heir to Disney's *Fantasia,* the 1940 creation that yokes Bach, Stravinsky, and Mussorgsky with cartoons, the motion picture that has influenced many film-makers of today, particularly Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, two directors who are obviously influential on the work of Steven Lisberger. Thus it goes full circle.

Computer graphics are the basis of *Tron.* It is a process in which images are electronically created from binary codes. *Tron* isn't the first motion picture to make use of the computer, but it uses it to a greater extent than any previous popular creation. Silicon chips, the essence of computers, are not a subject upon which many are inclined to dwell, with the exception, of course, of those who are entirely captivated by thinking and doing machines—those blear-eyed fanatics who spend nights in temperature-and-humidity-controlled rooms, loading a cryptic language via a keyboard, staring at a cathode-ray tube

screen. With the geometric increase in the number of chips that influence our lives—digital watches, word processors, home video games—the computer, in one Protean guise or another, is coming to have an influence on the rest of us as profound and pervasive as the steam engine.

There is something unsettling about the idea—and the fact, like *Tron*—that the computer has capabilities far beyond those of man. Animators, the types who worked on preintegrated-circuit movies like *Fantasia,* cannot create a *Tron;* those binary believers for whom Boolean algebra and VLSI's are fundamentals of existence, could, given a hand by products from Digital Equipment Corporation and others. Man is limited. Certainly that's not a fresh statement, but it's one that computers are forcing us to face again. Of course, no computer can work without having at some point relied on man, and artifical intelligence, which is being diligently developed at labs from Cambridge in the East to Cupertino in the West, is still far from realization. These are soothing thoughts, but only temporary anodynes. There will be more *Trons.* Eventually, only 20th-century Luddites will be without personal micro or minicomputers. This is not a recommendation, merely an observation.

A recurrent theme in fiction—in literature both high and low—is that the plucky spirit of man will overcome all challenges: natural, alien, artificial. There is something to that; man has survived against odds that make Darwin's theory of selection a moot point. In one sense, the computer is another, more subtle challenge, a challenge to man's creative powers, those powers which help define *Homo sapiens.* Traditional animators can't be happy with *Tron* any more than livery operators were pleased with Henry Ford, or Abel Gance with the sound track. Technology seems to have an inexorable power. Still, there is one thing to consider. Although Xerox probably has a machine that can create manuscripts that are truly remarkable, it will never construct one that will surpass the beauty of *The Book of Kells.* Secular triumphs are one thing; the inexplicable miracle of man is quite another. (SM) □

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ART

El Greco on Constitution Avenue

Anyone who saw El Greco in Toledo must have been overwhelmed by the refined, even coquettish, gauntness of his figurative renditions, by his magical style that transmutes posed asceticism into some sort of spiritual chic. In the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., where a lot of El Greco's paintings could, in July and August, be seen together in one package, it is his sexual preference that comes hauntingly to the fore. We are far from hinting that the curators and producers of this particular international exhibition (besides the National Gallery, also displayed at the Prado in Madrid, and to be shown at the Toledo Museum of Art and the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts) intended to pander to the *Village Voice* crowd and the denizens of Christopher Street in New York City. Whatever attraction resides today in deviationism, we would prefer to stress that this aspect is of exceptional interest only to those who wonder how a great artist can serve as an apologist for the most rarefied religious sentiments and, at the same time, be at severe variance with one of Christianity's most uncompromising tenets. This query aside, one wanders through rooms filled with realizations of El Greco's genius, his visual sophistication, his sorcery with color, his graphic perfection, and one is grateful that paradoxes serve us so well, when they are only put into proper perspective. □

MUSIC

Musical Masters: Minor to Major

by Robert R. Reilly

A great deal of formula music is written in any age by musical grinds who can neither bring a form to perfection (à la Bach or Mozart) nor blaze a path beyond it (à la Beethoven). There are, however, *petits mâitres,* who work well within the confines of the musical orthodoxies of their period. Ludwig Spohr (1784–1859) was one of the best of these.

Charm is the word for the music of Spohr, and the Musical Heritage Society has produced a two-record set of his chamber music (MHS 824364) containing *Nonet in F,* Op. 31; *Octet in E,* Op. 32; *Quintet in C Minor,* Op. 52; and *Septet in A Minor,* Op. 147. The first two are for winds and strings, the *Quintet* for piano and winds, the *Septet* for piano, winds and strings. The *Nonet* is particularly pleasing and one seems never to tire of it. The *Octet* and *Septet* exude the same gentle lyricism and sweet melancholy. Spohr's instrumentation is fresh, his music has the same crystalline quality as the music of Mozart, whom he idolized, and he makes his instruments "sing" in a way that goes directly to the heart. This is the kind of music that used to be written before Romanticism became too headstrong and hysterical for delicacy and charm.

Also from MHS is the work of another minor master, Luigi Boccherini's *Six Quintets for Flute and Strings,* Op. 12 (1773), played by the Via Nova Quartet (MHS 4290). Boccherini (1743–1805) was almost as prolific as Vivaldi, writing over 500 works, but his music has yet to undergo a similar renaissance. Boccherini's music noddles along quite pleasantly without demanding one's full attention, though one's attention is rewarded when it is applied.

Josef Suk (1874–1935) was a student of Dvorak, who also became Suk's father-in-law in 1898, just before Suk composed the incidental music to Julius Zayer's play *Raduz & Mahulena.* In 1900 Suk fashioned a suite out of this material, entitled *A Fairy Tale,* Op. 16, which has been recently recorded by Supraphon (1410 2699 Q6). "This is music from heaven," exclaimed Dvorak. Not quite. But nepotism aside, this suite makes for very pleasant listening. No plot for the story of Raduz's love for the royal daughter Mahulena is provided aside from the four movement titles, but no plot is needed to enjoy this melodious, folkish work. *The Fantastic Scherzo,* Op. 25, is equally ingratiating and colorful. Jiri Belohlavek effectively conducts the Prague Symphony Orchestra.

The beginning of the 20th century was a time of ferment and crisis characterized by a revulsion against the grotesqueries of bathetic Romanticism. Composers recoiled in a variety of ways. Stravinsky took refuge in neoclassical discipline and clarity. Eric Satie and Francis Poulenc tweaked noses and punctured pomposities with humor. Serge Prokofiev celebrated the new "Age of Steel" with motoric and violent hymns to the new god—the machine. Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly turned for inspiration to folk music. Arnold Schoenberg, after taking morbid Romanticism about as far as it could physically go in a two-hour composition for Mahlerian mega-orchestra and chorus with *Gurre-Lieder,* turned against his first love with an almost pathological vengeance by gutting music of tonality and key structure. Having nothing else to hang his music on, he later returned to classical forms, the genesis and sense of which come from the natural tensions and resolutions inherent in the tonal relationships he had abandoned and forbidden. London

Mr. Reilly is with the United States International Communication Agency in Washington, D.C.

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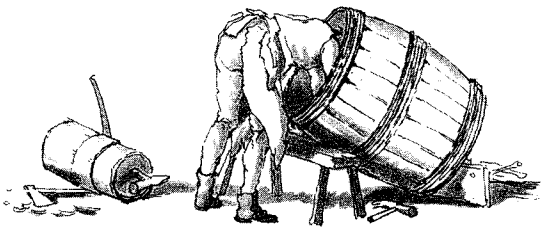
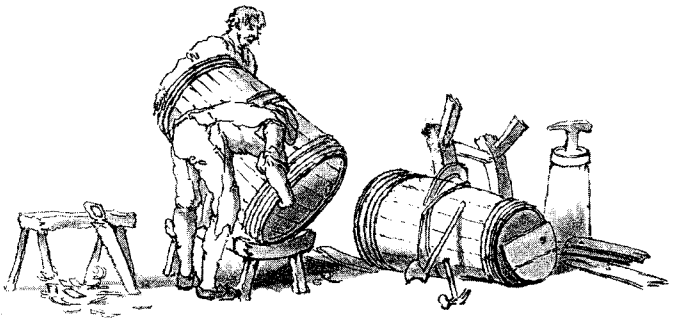


Records and the Vienna Philharmonic, conducted by Christoph Van Dohnanyi, have provided an interesting recording (LDR71015) of two seldom-heard works that plot two points in Schoenberg's career. The earlier of the two, *Six Lieder,* Op. 8 (1904), is in the same late-Romantic vein as *Gurre-Lieder,* an opulent, extravagant rendition of poetic texts which should be enjoyed by fans of similar excesses by Strauss and Mahler. *Erwartung,* Op. 17, written just four years later, is in a different world. Here the dissolution becomes explicit. Though orchestrally rich, the music is atonal and athematic, and its disintegration parallels the emotional and psychological disintegration of a woman who finds her unfaithful lover dead in the woods. She becomes unhinged, necrophiliac, delirious. Music to correspond to this is hardly pleasant but has dramatic purpose and effect. It is easier to understand the application of atonal technique to dramatize disorder, though, than it is to comprehend why Schoenberg completely emancipated it as the new norm of music. The progress of Schoenberg's regress is fascinating to follow, as in a comparison of *Erwartung* to the piece that preceded it: *Five Pieces for Orchestra,* Op. 16. (The two recordings are available on Nonesuch.) The tension between the two directions in which he was being pulled is about equal and is compellingly conveyed in the music. One final note. The jacket cover of this album is illustrated with a painting by Schoenberg which is reminiscent of his self-portrait, surely next to Van Gogh's as one of the most disturbing and depressing visions a man could have of himself.

There were a few composers at the beginning of the century who seemed oblivious to the deliberate evisceration of tonality and the resultant destruction of form. One of the greatest of these was Jean Sibelius (1865–1957), whose work is regaining popularity. Critics proclaim the death of the symphony about as often as they do the death of the novel. But in 1934 Constant Lambert saw Sibelius as the salvation of the exsanguinated symphonic form, indeed as the greatest symphonist since Beethoven, and prophesied that his music would one day provide the inspiration for an escape from the "official resolution" of Schoenberg et al.

One of Sibelius's best was his *Symphony No. 5.* No one had to tell Sibelius his music was good. He proclaimed: "I begin already dimly to see the mountain I shall certainly ascend . . . God opens His door and His orchestra plays the Fifth Symphony." Such a claim may be rather extravagant, but the transcendent *is* perceptible in this mighty work, imbued with the feeling of some elemental force. A new digital recording of the *Fifth Symphony* is available in stunning sound on London Records (LDR 71041). It is performed by the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy. The first movement has the requisite power and sweep of a great performance, but by the last movement that immense power is only partially evident. A laudatory review in the *Washington Post* stated that Ashkenazy "does not take the 'monumental' approach but a hearteningly vital one: Every phrase seems convincingly alive." But this is not detail music; it *is* monumental; as effective as its details are, they are better when one does not notice them in isolation.

Constant Lambert's hope that Sibelius would become a source of inspiration (not imitation) has been realized in the work of his fellow Englishman Edmund Rubbra (1901–). (Also, most explicitly in William Walton's exciting *First Symphony,* 1935, now domestically available on Nonesuch 71394). Chandos Records, an English company, has released an Australian recording of Rubbra's *Symphony No. 5 in B-Flat,* Op. 63 (1947–48), the opening measures of which sound quite Sibelian indeed. But the impression is momentary, as are the instances of Elgarian and English pastoralist influences. Melodically strong and memorable, lyrical, beautiful, and tonally structured, this moving music might as well be asking "What crisis?" in the face of the doomsayers of Western art. Listen to the Sibelian climax in the third movement marked *Grave,* or the ecstatic brass resounding in the final Allegro vivo. Over 80, Rubbra has written eleven symphonies. But who has ever heard of him? That music of this stature and quality is neglected in the concert halls and recording studios, which reverberate instead with the modern musical grinds of the twelve-tone formula, is a disgrace. □



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Justice for Mr. Middleton

by Edward J. Walsh

I object to the unsigned but nasty attack on Drew Middleton in the May/June 1982 issue of *Chronicles*. Though I did not read the specific magazine piece by Middleton, I was struck not only by the unworthy tone but by the author's obvious ignorance of many notable achievements of Drew Middleton: "He is highly respected, although God only knows why."

Drew Middleton is highly respected for accomplishments that have nothing to do with his employment at the *New York Times*. He is the author of *The Sky Suspended,* the definitive history of the Battle of Britain, which he covered on the scene. *The Sky Suspended* is a beautiful book that chronicles the valor of the British people as well as the Royal Air Force. In 1975, Middleton published *Can America Win the Next War?,* an analysis of American and Soviet military capabilities, in which he exposed many of the weaknesses of U.S. and NATO forces. Significantly, he did not limit his excruciating examination of this all-important subject to military matters, but commented extensively on the moral crisis of the West, particularly the United States, and condemned the trend towards an anarchy of moral values. This, I believe, is also part of the *Chronicles'* efforts.

Drew Middleton is no tunnel-visioned tool of the liberal culture, as the *Chronicles* piece depicts him. While one can argue at this point that liberals were responsible for our defeat in Vietnam, that doesn't mean that U.S. forces and military commanders were innocent. Indeed, they were guilty of many tragic errors. For example, service in the combat zone as an aid to career advancement had at least as much importance to Pentagon bureaucrats as did winning the war. While political constraints from Washington clearly played a role in the war's outcome—indeed played a major role, as I have written myself—the U.S. military played at war in Vietnam with tactics designed for Europe or the North Atlantic. Officers with combat experience were rotated out of the war zone to make room for innocents and incompetents. As Edward Luttwak has noted, the lives of American naval pilots were risked, and many lost, bombing targets that could have been hit by artillery or naval gunfire, so that the Navy's air wings could get a "piece of the action."

In short, the history of what happened in Vietnam and why is endlessly complex. Military shortsightedness and stupidity complemented political blindness. There is a need, therefore, for objective analysis of what went wrong on the field in Vietnam, for plenty did go wrong. Many articles like Middleton's *Times* piece have investigated them, and there is room for still more. The point is that one need not preach about liberals in order to investigate the military history of that conflict. The *Chronicles* author, however, is evidently preoccupied with grander things. One can make ad hominem attacks on experts in military matters if one is indifferent to military affairs, or ignorant of the illustrious work of Drew Middleton. But an assault on such an able and thoughtful journalist doesn't hide ignorance—it displays it. □

Mr. Walsh is a former Marine Corps officer.

THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

On Momentous Blunders

"Nothing doth more hurt in a state than that cunning men pass for wise," wrote Bacon. We are afraid that what's going on these days in the minds of our foreign-policy conceptualists, and in the chambers where such decisions are made, supports that ancient insight, which fathoms the very nature of how we manage our affairs abroad.

It is beginning to look like President Reagan's Waterloo may lie somewhere in the Middle East. There are two basic schools of thought about that area of intense interest. The first school maintains that the existence of Israel, and indeed its strength, as an outpost of the democratic West is not just a figment of our sentiments but a hard-core, realistic, strategic, ideological and military asset. The second, called Arabist, claims that the Arab world, with its large population and current wealth, is a better option to provide a bulwark against Soviet expansionism in that part of the world. The latter, of course, involves some weighty economic arguments, as well as a few more-pedestrian temptations for sensitive souls and keen minds, which are always discernible in a political approach to founts of immense and tangible profits.

Mr. Reagan, who, in the end, bears the full responsibility for choices whose outcomes will carry the name of his Presidency, seems to be confused and uncertain. He is searching for a compromise in a conflict that, partially thanks to earlier American mistakes, has become so polarized that no deal is possible. He is under pressure from the prevailing Arabists both in the State Department and in the multinational corporate businesses so

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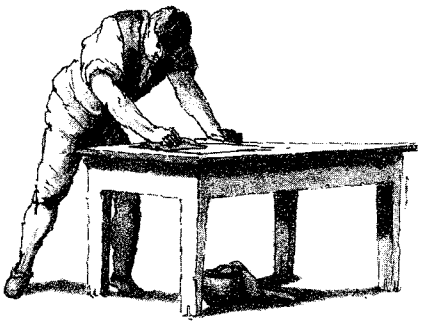
dear to his heart. He does not recognize that they are cunning—but not wise—men: long-term wisdom has never been the goal of the masters of diplomatic maneuvering and quotidian pecuniary success. He seems incapable of forming a broader foreign-policy vision within a sphere of intricate, historically entangled political vectors. Either he has forgotten his conviction that totalitarianism is mankind's scourge, or he has become perplexed about what totalitarianism is.

No one with an unprejudiced eye would deny that the underlying struggle in the Middle East is between a pluralistic democracy and assorted totalitarian forces whose *raison d'être* is firmly grounded either in petty "socialist" exploitative tyrannies, or in the entrenched interests of tribal hierarchies, or in fanatical religionism. All these ideological predispositions overlap in the current Arab amalgam; they are sources of occasional mutual mayhem, but they also unify all Arab countries in the common bond of a cruel—at least from a Western perspective—social reality in which dire poverty, injustice, corruption, violence and total contempt for human rights thrive. These are not Latin American autocracies or dictatorships, where—realistically or not—we may expect a Brazilian general or a Somoza to grow democratically civilized. These are regimes that are thoroughly antithetical to what *we* stand for, societies which long ago decided to consider their world view a legitimate *casus belli* against *our* ethos and *our* fundamental beliefs.

In an excellent *Wall Street Journal* article, Professor Walter Berns recently demolished the notions behind an inane liberal-Democratic project (a so-called National Peace Academy from which "thinkers" like Jonathan Schell and Paul Newman and the theologians of liberation would prove to the world that Washington, not Moscow, is the place where world peace is unobtainable) and provided a few phrases of lasting value:

> On these principles, and with institutional refinements contributed by Montesquieu and our own Founding Fathers, we in the U.S. built the first liberal democracy. The connection between liberal democracy and peace is suggested by the following facts: The United States has never fought a war against another liberal democracy; not one of the many wars now raging in the world is a war between two liberal democracies; indeed, there has *never* been a war between two liberal democracies.

He could have extended his premise even further. In our recent history we have allied ourselves only once with a totalitarian power—Soviet Russia—with whom we achieved something which, at that time, was labeled a common victory. That "triumph" soon proved to be an inexhaustible source of vile woes. Then in 1956 President Eisenhower and Mr. Dulles took the side of Nasser's savage, totalitarian nationalism against three democracies resolved not to submit to fascist Arabic blackmail, and the result was a quarter-century of war in the region. Those were two momentous



blunders. We are afraid that in bartering wisdom for cunning, President Reagan is heading toward a third one. The Lebanon crisis must serve only one objective: the elimination of our most implacable ideological foe, and Soviet Russia's most trusted proxy—Arab terrorism. Otherwise, our basic concept of ideological alliance will suffer yet another defeat. Every time we have taken indecent liberties with the essential idea of American foreign policy, *we* have been the loser. (LT)

Publishing and Dissemination

In July a number of publishers, editors and observers of the current cultural scene gathered in Washington, D.C., invited by the Free Congress Research and Educational Foundation to participate in something entitled "Workshop on Disseminating Conservative Ideas," which was chaired by Professor Charles A. Moser of the George Washington University.

In an era when the liberals accuse conservatives of "warfare against cultural pluralism"—as one Manhattan organ of homosexual bolshevism put it recently—it is hard to figure out exactly what the liberal measure of a pluralistic culture is. We all know that most liberal New York publishers would reject the manuscript of *The Possessed* today, claiming that it slandered an innocent bunch of youthful idealists pursuing lofty humanitarian goals. To anyone with an unprejudiced eye it's obvious that the opinion-making industry, which includes publishing and is firmly in liberal hands, does not see cultural pluralism as a fair and even-handed exchange of ideas which assumes that a genuinely opposite point of view is a common civilizational asset. The liberal cultural establishment practices tokenism, which means that a few non-liberal names are awarded exposure and recognition in order to maintain an appearance of tolerance, while factual access to the market of ideas remains strictly regulated by liberal ideological priorities.

In such a situation, any serious attempt to disagree with liberal ideas and attitudes as well as the intellectual and literary creativity related to them, must receive their support from a nonliberal publishing institution. If that support is not available, those efforts will hopelessly wilt, leaving the American culture prey to liberal monopoly. How specifically to avoid the realization of such a gloomy

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prognosis was debated during the aforementioned conference. We await the consequences of those important deliberations.

Henry Fonda, R.I.P.

The death of Henry Fonda marks the end of an era, the closing of a cinematic period of ideological imagery which left a momentous cultural legacy. Among its other symbolizations, the studio system —so derided by liberals as a product of the greedy lowbrow Hollywood moguls —endowed the American culture with an enduring and abundant portraiture of a liberal as hero. Those were times in which the liberal attitude—whether that of a Western or heartland populist or a New England nonconformist—had a ringing accuracy and legitimacy. Those were symbolizations that were duly critical of the excesses of individualism, or religiosity, and the obtuseness of ignorance, but they were suffused with patriotism and firmly grounded in the best American tradition of social pluralism and humanitarian concerns—integrity battling injustice was then the liberal principle. Conservative directors like John Ford gave some unforgettable artistic dimensions to those concerns, and Henry Fonda was their premier and most creative personification. We, despite occasional differences with this or another exemplification, had little quarrel with their ethical substance. Then liberalism degenerated from a philosophy suffused with love for America and her tenets into a dogmatic cultural orthodoxy dedicated to denigrating America, to falsifying American history, to branding as fascists and bigots those with different ideals. That latter-day liberalism engendered a process of alienation of which Mr. Fonda's own family may be a good example.

A few years ago Henry Fonda was honored at a special celebration by the American Film Institute at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In one portion of the program a choir from the U.S. Naval Academy sang a song: when they finished a cadet stepped out front, saluted Fonda, and said: "Thank you, Mr. Roberts . . ." The cadet was black. Fonda's cheeks were wet with tears. This moment, perhaps, encapsulated his career, his artistic achievement, his beliefs and his liberalism altogether. We mourn him as an exemplary and emblematic American.

Ralph Moody, R.I.P.

Ralph Moody's name probably won't be found in any companions or guides to American literature, yet this writer, who recently passed away at age 84, is probably more influential in a subtle way than many authors about whom nothing more than the fact that they were required reading long ago in a school text is remembered. Mr. Moody's books—*The Little Britches, Man of the Family, The Fields of Home,* among them—are the type read when growing up, specifically, in the preteen years. They address the youthful mind on a one-on-one level, without embarrassment, not condescendingly. For the most part, the novels deal with Mr. Moody's life growing up on farms and ranches. They tell of times when money was tight, animals died, minor illnesses became critical—when the family and its extended group of close friends had to draw together through trust and faith to transcend their problems. They are books illustrated with little drawings showing wagons, cowboys, and the general store. In other words, they are the type of books at which so-called progressive publishers and librarians sneer, demanding to know where the heroin addicts and prostitutes are. Their relevance, of course, is like that of the Hollywood Westerns of the 1920's, which show that things like hard work, thrift, love—especially love, as opposed to today's knowledge of sexual deviations and mechanical pleasures—are important. Ralph Moody's books helped—and hopefully help—create a valuable frame for young minds. Few could demand more of their lives. □

JOURNALISM

Ontology and Ethics

In *Parade*—one of American journalism's shallowest puddles of prefabricated opinion—Mr. Carroll O'Connor, an intensely leftist actor who, alone in the history of performing arts, was outsmarted by his own creation, envisions the commencement address which *he* would deliver to graduating collegians. His warning: Don't believe "them" if they tell you "the future is in your hands."

"Them," of course, stands for America—unjust, stifling, corporate, and all. But Mr. O'Connor, the sage, fails to inform the suspenseful graduates where else in the world more of the future is in the hands of individuals. Russia? Cuba? France, perhaps? And why do the young from those countries try so desperately to leave there and live here? To be deprived of their handful of the future?

A couple of pages further another maven, a radical "publicist" named Dotson Rader, interviews Mayor Ed Koch about crime. Koch doubts that poverty is the prime cause of crime. Mr. Rader cannot believe his ears; astonished, he asks: "If not poverty, *why* do people commit crimes? . . ."

He has never learned that there are good and bad people. That lack of knowledge is a major key to "making it" in Manhattan—all the way to the top. □

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